

## TRAGIC NOISE AND RHETORICAL FRIGIDITY IN LYCOPHRON'S *ALEXANDRA*\*

In this paper, we seek to shed fresh light on the aesthetic and stylistic affiliations of Lycophron's *Alexandra*, a unique poetic creation.<sup>1</sup> In 1,474 verses of iambic trimeter, an unnamed Trojan guard relays to king Priam a lengthy prophetic speech by his daughter Cassandra. Framed by the guard's own programmatic reflections (*Alex.* 1–30, 1461–74), the reported speech spans vast swathes of history and time, ranging from the Trojan War to the Roman defeat of Macedon in 197 B.C.E. The poem is, in effect, a tragic messenger speech writ large, generically experimental in its combination of drama and epic, and extremely self-conscious in its manipulation of truth, voice and literary authority. Despite much excellent recent work on the poem, however, it remains remarkably difficult to pin the *Alexandra* down within traditional frameworks of literary interpretation. While some scholars have attempted to situate the poem against Lycophron's Hellenistic contemporaries,<sup>2</sup> others have turned as far

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<sup>1</sup> Following common practice, we refer to the author of the poem as Lycophron throughout, and we draw text from S. Hornblower, *Lycophron: Alexandra* (Oxford, 2015); translations are our own. The following publications are referred to by authors alone: C. Cusset and É. Prioux (edd.), *Lycophron: éclats d'obscurité* (Saint-Étienne, 2009); C. McNelis and A. Sens, *The Alexandra of Lycophron: A Literary Study* (Oxford, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Y. Durbec, *Lycophron et ses contemporains* (Amsterdam, 2014).

affield as late European Romanticism in their hunt for a fitting analogue.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, we wish to build on such efforts by approaching the *Alexandra* from two distinct but complementary angles, which will together enhance our understanding of the poem's protean style.

There is a growing *communis opinio* – to which we subscribe – that the *Alexandra* should be dated to the early second century B.C.E., at a time when Roman power was on the rise.<sup>4</sup> One result of this down-dating is that the poem cannot have been composed by the famous Lycophron of Chalcis to which it is ascribed. Another is that it is firmly rooted in a post-Callimachean world. These two observations form the background of our two approaches to the poem.

First, we explore what can be gained by reading Lycophron's poem against the backdrop of Callimachus' poetry. We contend that the *Alexandra* presents a radical and polemical departure from the Alexandrian's poetic programme, pointedly appropriating key Callimachean images, while also countering Callimachus' apparent dismissal of the 'noisy' tragic genre. Previous scholarship has noted links between the openings of the *Aetia* and *Alexandra*, but we contend that this relationship is only one part of a larger aesthetic divide between the two poets: by embracing the raucous acoustics of tragedy, Lycophron's poem offers a self-conscious and agonistic departure from Callimachus' aesthetic preferences.

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<sup>3</sup> E. Sistakou, *The Aesthetics of Darkness: A Study of Hellenistic Romanticism in Apollonius, Lycophron and Nicander* (Leuven, 2012), 131–90.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. K.R. Jones, 'Lycophron's *Alexandra*, the Romans and Antiochus III', *JHS* 134 (2014), 41–55; Hornblower (n. 1), 36–9; McNelis and Sens, 10–11. The major rival theories are (i) a third century dating (e.g. A. Hurst, *Sur Lycophron* (Geneva, 2012), 15–22); (ii) a third century core with later interpolations (e.g. S.R. West 'Lycophron Italicised', *JHS* 104 (1984), 127–51).

Second, we consider another way of conceiving the aesthetics of the poem beyond a Callimachean frame, highlighting how Lycophron pointedly engages with and evokes earlier Aristotelian literary criticism concerning the ‘frigid’ style. We contend that the *Alexandra* constructs its own independent literary history, centred around the alleged name of its author, ‘Lycophron’. We suggest that this traditional attribution is best understood as a pen name that signposts the poem’s stylistic affiliations, aligning it not so much with the Ptolemaic playwright Lycophron of Chalcis, but rather with a larger rhetorical tradition of stylistic frigidity. Ultimately, through these two approaches we hope to highlight further aspects of the *Alexandra*’s aesthetic diversity.

#### THE POETICS OF POST-CALLIMACHEAN TRAGEDY

Recent scholarship has established a secure connection between Callimachus and Lycophron, based primarily on the latter’s engagement with rare Callimachean vocabulary.<sup>5</sup> But this relationship can be extended further to the sphere of poetics. In particular, the opening of the *Alexandra* resonates pointedly against Callimachus’ poetic programme (*Alex.* 1–15):

λέξω τὰ πάντα νητρεκῶς, ἅ μ’ ἱστορεῖς,  
ἀρχῆς ἀπ’ ἄκρας. ἦν δὲ μηκυνθῆ λόγος,  
οὐ γινώθι, δέσποτ’· οὐ γὰρ ἦσυχος κόρη  
ἔλυσε χρησμῶν ὡς πρὶν αἰόλον στόμα,

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<sup>5</sup> A.S. Hollis, ‘Some poetic connections of Lycophron’s *Alexandra*’, in P.J. Finglass et al. (edd.), *Hesperos: Studies in Ancient Greek Poetry presented to M. L. West on his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 2007), 276–93, especially 283–8; Hornblower (n. 1), 27–31.



This programmatic opening intersects with the famous prologue of Callimachus' *Aetia* (fr. 1 Harder) on both a verbal and thematic level.<sup>6</sup> To start, we can list the parallels that scholars have previously identified: both prologues are concerned with learning (εὐμαθής, 11 ~ σοφίην, fr. 1.18), questions of length (μηκυνθῆ λόγος, 2 ~ [ὀλ]ιγόστιχος ... μακρήν, fr. 1.9–10) and assertions of novelty (οὐ ... ὡς πρὶν, 3–4 ~ κελεύθους | [ἀτρίπτο]υς, fr. 1.27–8). Both exploit the unusual metaphor of ‘unrolling’ words or paths (τυλίσσω, 11 ~ ἐλ[ίσσω], fr. 1.5).<sup>7</sup> And in both, the speaker likens himself to a winged figure: the messenger to a runner, Callimachus to a cicada (ἐγὼ δ' ... πτηνός, 13–15 ~ [ἐγ]ὼ δ' ... πτερόεις, fr. 1.32, cf. πτερόν, fr. 1.39). Most striking of all, however, is Lycophron's apparent rewriting of Callimachus' path imagery from the prologue (*Aet.* fr. 1.25–8):

πρὸς δέ σε] καὶ τόδ' ἄνωγα, τὰ μὴ πατέουσιν ἄμαξαι  
 τὰ στείβειν, ἐτέρων ἵχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμὰ  
 δίφρον ἐλ]ῆν μῆδ' οἴμον ἀνὰ πλατύν, ἀλλὰ κελεύθους  
 ἀτρίπτο]υς, εἰ καὶ στεινοτέρην ἐλάσεις.

This too I bid you: tread a path which wagons do not trample; do not drive your chariot over the common tracks of others, nor along a wide road, but rather on untrodden paths, even if it means driving a narrower course.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Y. Durbec, ‘Lycophron et la poétique de Callimaque: le prologue de l’*Alexandra*, 1-15’, *ARF* 8 (2006), 81–83; id. (n. 2), 24–35; McNelis and Sens, 63–6.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. A.R. Looijenga, ‘Unrolling the *Alexandra*: the allusive messenger-speech of Lycophron's prologue and epilogue’, in Cusset and Prioux, 59–80, at 72–3, following Hunt's supplement.

Just as Apollo instructs Callimachus to pursue a specific kind of path, so too does the Lycophronic guard instruct Priam to pursue Cassandra's path of riddles (9–12). We shall consider the significance of this parallel shortly, but for now, we should simply acknowledge the sheer abundance of Lycophron's hodological imagery, which precisely echoes the language of Callimachus' proem.<sup>8</sup>

Taken together, this list of parallels suggests a significant relationship between these two passages, especially given their shared introductory and programmatic contexts. Scholars, however, have disagreed about what to make of these connections. Some suppose that they simply reflect independent engagement with broader trends of the literary tradition.<sup>9</sup> But in our view this conclusion is too cautious, since it fails to account for the underlying stylistic contrasts at play. Many details of the messenger's prologue diverge dramatically from the Callimachean course in such a way as to suggest a consistent aesthetic strategy.<sup>10</sup> The guard's promise to tell 'everything accurately from the very beginning' (1–2; cf. ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, 30) implies a systematic and sequential narrative akin to the 'one continuous song' desired by the

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<sup>8</sup> διοίχνει (10) ~ ἴχνια (fr. 1.26); οἶμας (11) ~ οἶμον (fr. 1.27); τρίβος (11) ~ [ἀτρίπτο]υς (fr. 1.28); κελεύθω (12) ~ κελεύθους (fr. 1.27). Cf. Looijenga (n. 7), 74 n. 27. Only Lycophron's διεξόδους (14) lacks a direct verbal parallel in the *Aetia* prologue (but see n. 33 below).

<sup>9</sup> A. Sens, 'Hellenistic tragedy and Lycophron's *Alexandra*', in J.J. Clauss and M. Cuypers (edd.), *A Companion to Hellenistic Literature* (Oxford, 2010), 297–313, at 308; McNelis and Sens, 64.

<sup>10</sup> We thus find ourselves in closer agreement with Durbec (n. 2), 24–35, although he nevertheless fails to articulate clearly the relationship that he envisions between Callimachus and Lycophron: at times, he seems to suggest affiliation, rather than distance: e.g. pp. 33–5 on their similar totalising world views.

Telchines, but rejected by Callimachus (ἐν ἄεισμα διηνεκές, *Aet.* fr. 1.3). His apology to his ‘master’ for speaking at length (2–3) wryly acknowledges his departure from Callimachus’ stated preference for brevity.<sup>11</sup> And his recalibration of Callimachus’ path imagery further suggests an aesthetic rebranding: in place of the Callimachean untrodden paths of novelty, we are asked to navigate the ‘unutterable’ or ‘inexplicable’ paths of Cassandra’s prophecies (δυσφάτους αἰνιγμάτων | οἴμας, 10–11) to reach ‘what lies in darkness’ (τὰν σκοτῶ, 12): a self-referential proclamation of the poem’s obscure and challenging style.<sup>12</sup>

Such stylistic departure from Callimachus is also visible in the opening verses’ rewriting of a passage from the Aeschylean *Prometheus Vincitus* (*PV* 609–10):

λέξω τορῶς σοι πᾶν ὅπερ χρήζεις μαθεῖν,  
οὐκ ἐμπλέκων αἰνίγματ’, ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶ λόγῳ

I shall tell you clearly everything that you wish to learn, not interweaving riddles, but in plain language.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Durbec (n. 6). δέσποτ’ (3) strictly refers to Priam, but on a metapoetic level it could also refer to Lycophron’s literary ‘master’, Callimachus, to whom he almost apologizes directly; Lycophron may then invert Callimachus’ self-depiction as a παῖς in the *Aetia* prologue: not only ‘child’, but also ‘slave’ (LSJ s.v. III).

<sup>12</sup> The paths of Cassandra’s song may even become labyrinthine: her mouth is αἰόλον (4), a close synonym of δαίδαλος (evoking Daedalus, the creator of the labyrinth); and the guard tells Priam to ‘unravel’ her path (τυλίσσω, a verb used of winding a ball of wool [schol. *Od.* 6.53], like Theseus in the labyrinth).

In the drama, Prometheus promises to speak plainly to Io, avoiding the αἰνίγματα that characterize Cassandra’s speech (cf. αἰνιγμάτων, 10). Scholars have previously noted how this opening allusion advertises Lycophron’s Aeschylean affiliation, while also defining the *Alexandra*’s style implicitly through contrast: unlike Prometheus’ prophecy, Cassandra’s (and hence the messenger’s) words are not free from αἰνίγματα, not presented in plain language (ἀπλῶ λόγῳ) and not conducted τορῶς (‘clearly’ or ‘smartly’).<sup>13</sup> What has gone unnoticed, however, is the particular resonance of this final adverb. Besides suggesting riddle-free clarity, it evokes a literary trait desired by Callimachus elsewhere. In an epigrammatic fragment, the Alexandrian famously dismissed Antimachus’ *Lyde* for failing to be τορός (Λύδη καὶ παχὺ γράμμα καὶ οὐ τορόν, fr. 398 Pf.). It is a stylistic attribute which Callimachus co-opted for his pure and refined aesthetic, opposed to literary παχύτης.<sup>14</sup> The opening allusion to *Prometheus Bound* thus not only opposes Lycophron’s cryptic text to the plain-speaking Prometheus, but also to the Alexandrian’s pure aesthetic: unlike either Prometheus or Callimachus, Lycophron’s γράμμα is οὐ τορόν. This allusion to *Prometheus Vincitus* programmatically sets the poem against Callimachus’ literary preferences from the very start.

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<sup>13</sup> Looijenga (n. 7), 62–5 (further noting the echo of αἰολοστόμους, *PV* 661, in αἰόλον στόμα, 4); Sens (n. 9), 300–1; McNelis and Sens, 54–5. The Aeschylean authenticity of *PV* was not doubted in antiquity: M. Griffith, *The Authenticity of Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge, 1977), 226–45; id., *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge, 1983), 32.

<sup>14</sup> For the stylistic associations of τορός, see N. Krevans, ‘Fighting against Antimachus: the *Lyde* and the *Aetia* reconsidered’, in M.A. Harder et al. (edd.), *Callimachus* (Groningen, 1993), 149–60, at 158.

The most significant point of reversal between the two prologues, however, is on the topic of divine inspiration and the sound it produces. Cassandra, just like Callimachus, is inspired directly by Apollo. Lycophron makes this clear at the outset (Cassandra is said to have ‘uttered the voice of Phoebus from her bay-chewing throat’, 6) just as he does at the poem’s close: Cassandra refers to herself as a ‘swallow possessed by Apollo’ (φοιβόληπτον ... χελιδόνα, 1460) and the guard calls her a ‘maiden inspired by Phoebus’ (παρθένου φοιβαστρίας, 1468).<sup>15</sup> This Apolline inspiration, however, results in a different form of song from that favoured by the Callimachean Apollo. The Alexandrian god favoured a slender Muse (Μοῦσαν ... λεπταλέην, fr. 1.24), while Callimachus distanced himself from ‘song that makes much noise’ (μέγα ψοφέουσαν ἀοιδήν, fr. 1.19) and the ‘din of donkeys’ ([θ]όρυβον ... ὄνων, fr. 1.30) in favour of the ‘shrill voice’ of the cicada (λιγύν ἦχον, fr. 1.29). But such cacophony is precisely the kind of sound that emerges from Cassandra’s mouth: framing the statement of her Apolline inspiration (6), we hear that she utters an ‘immense, all-mixed shout’ (ἄσπετον ... παμμιγῆ βοήν, 5) and imitates the voice of the dark Sphinx (Σφιγγὸς κελαινῆς γῆρυν ἐκμιμουμένη, 7). Alongside the princess’ later association with the Sphinx, Maenads, Sirens, Sibyl and Bacchantes (1461–6), this suggests a different kind of acoustic from that favoured by Callimachus’ Apollo.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The poem’s framing references to Cassandra’s ‘crooked speech’ (λοξῶν ... ἐπῶν, 14; λοξὸν ... μῦθον, 1467–8) also evoke the cult title of Apollo Loxias: Looijenga (n. 7), 69; cf. schol. *Alex.* 1467a, p. 260.12–13 Leone; Tzetz. *Alex.* 1466, p. 397.12–16 Scheer.

<sup>16</sup> For the parallel between Cassandra and the Sirens (both failed singers), see E. Pillinger, *Cassandra and the Poetics of Prophecy in Greek and Latin Literature* (Cambridge, 2019), 133–8.

This alternative aesthetic is reinforced by a string of allusions to earlier passages of din and disarray in the Greek literary tradition. Scholars have previously focussed on the significance of παμμυγῆ in this regard: the rare word is only previously used of non-Greeks, especially Persians; it thus marks Cassandra’s speech as exotic and foreign, precisely how Callimachus brands his literary detractors.<sup>17</sup> To this point, however, we may also add the noun γῆρυν in verse 7, a Homeric *hapax legomenon* which in the *Iliad* relates to the din of the Trojan troops, precisely because they do not share one language – their voices are all mixed together (*Il.* 4.436–8):

ὥς Τρώων ἀλαλητὸς ἀνὰ στρατὸν εὐρὺν ὀρώρει  
οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἦεν ὁμὸς θρόος οὐδ’ ἴα γῆρυς,  
ἀλλὰ γλῶσσ’ ἐμέμικτο, πολύκλητοι δ’ ἔσαν ἄνδρες.

So arose the hubbub of the Trojans through the wide army; for there was no common speech nor single **language** shared by all of them, but their tongues were mixed and they were men summoned from many different lands.

Through this re-use of a Homeric rarity, Cassandra is aligned with foreign, alien sounds, which are distinctively noisy and cacophonous (ἀλαλητὸς, θρόος) – appropriately so for a Trojan princess. The same could also be said of δυσφάτους (10), a word which only appears once

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<sup>17</sup> Looijenga (n. 7), 65–6; McNelis and Sens, 66. Cf. βέλεα παμμυγῆ, Aesch. *Pers.* 269; παμμυγῆ στρατὸν, Timotheus fr. 791.175 *PMG*; and perhaps also βοὰ ... [πα]μμι[γ]ής, Tim. fr. 791.34 *PMG* (suppl. Diehl). Contrast Callimachus’ association of his enemies with the Massagetae, Persians and Medes (fr. 1.15–16, 18).

previously in the literary tradition, again of Cassandra’s prophecies, in Aeschylus’ description of the princess’ ‘inexplicable din’ (δυσφάτω κλαγγᾶ, *Ag.* 1152).<sup>18</sup> Through this dense network of sonic allusions, Lycophron establishes a sense of jumbled disorder and acoustic chaos. The *Alexandra* sets itself up as sonically antithetical to Callimachus’ preferences in the *Aetia* prologue.<sup>19</sup>

Such an acoustic aesthetic is reinforced at the end of the poem when Cassandra asks herself why she is ‘barking at length’ to the deaf elements of nature (μακρὰ ... βούζω, 1451–3) and ‘twanging’ the ‘empty noise’ of her mouth (κενὸν ψάλλουσα μάστακος κρότον, 1453). Lycophron again presents his work as the embodiment of discordant, non-Greek sound: the verb βούζω dehumanizes Cassandra, associating her with the barking of beasts,<sup>20</sup> while

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Looijenga (n. 7), 66–7. κλαγγή is another sound from which Callimachus distances himself in the *Aetia* prologue: his mention of the cranes and Pygmies (fr. 1.13–14) famously evokes *Il.* 3.3–6, with its triple repetition of the noun (again in a description of the noisy Trojans): cf. B. Acosta-Hughes and S.A. Stephens, ‘Rereading Callimachus’ *Aetia* fragment 1’, *CP* 97 (2002), 238–55, at 247–8.

<sup>19</sup> Pindar’s second dithyramb (fr. 70b S.–M.) offers a further allusive prism through which to read both texts, given its own programmatic ‘poetics of sound’ (J.I. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece: Matter, Sensation, and Experience* (Cambridge, 2010), 378–83). For Callimachus, cf. D.T. Steiner, ‘The poetics of sound: Callimachus’ rereading of Pindar fragment 70b S.–M.’, *CP* 110 (2015), 99–123; for Lycophron, Durbec (n. 2), 30.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. an epigram by Leonidas of Tarentum, where the same verb is used of the once noisy iambographer Hipponax (βούξας, 58.3 Gow–Page = *AP* 7.408.3) who is now quiet in death (ἄρτι ... ἐν ἡσυχίῃ, 58.4); the situation is reversed in the *Alexandra* for the girl who speaks ‘not quietly as before’ (οὐ γὰρ ἡσυχος ... ὡς πρίν, 3–4).

her lengthy speech aligns her with the kind of poetry that Callimachus rejects in the *Aetia* prologue (μακρά, 1451 ~ μακρήν, fr. 1.10). Particularly revealing, however, is the rare verb ψάλλουσα, usually used of plucking a bow- or lyre-string and thus ripe for metapoetic interpretation: as elsewhere in the poem, Cassandra’s identity blurs with that of the guard and poet, presenting the whole poem as a cacophony of ‘empty noise’ (κενὸν ... κρότον).

In addition, Cassandra’s closing words here evoke the Aesopic fable of the hedonistic cicada and hard-working ant, a tale which similarly stresses the futile din of song. While the ant secured hibernal provisions by working throughout the summer, the cicada spent all its time singing, was destitute when winter arrived, and received no sympathy or support from the industrious ant. The moral, it seems, is that there is an appropriate time for both work and play; industry is ultimately rewarded. This fable reaches us from antiquity in numerous forms, suggesting its enduring popularity.<sup>21</sup> But in one particular version, recounted by the *rhetor anonymus Brancatianus*, we read that ‘the twanging cicada’s labour proved empty’ (τῶ ψάλλοντι δὲ τέττιγι κενεὸς ἦν ὁ πόνος) and that the ant, rather than offering any help, told its suffering peer to keep on ‘dancing and making noise’ (νῦν χόρευε καὶ κρότει).<sup>22</sup> It is striking how closely Lycophron’s Cassandra echoes the verbal core of this fable: she ‘twangs empty noise’ (κενὸν ψάλλουσα ... κρότον), just as the Aesopic cicada ‘twangs’ and ‘makes noise’ to no avail (ψάλλοντι ... κενὸς ... κρότει). For an audience familiar with this fable, Cassandra

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<sup>21</sup> See F.R. Adrados, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable* (Leiden, 1999–2003), 3.146–9, 649–50. Cf. Babrius 140 (373 Perry); *Fab. Aphth.* 1 Hausrath–Hunger (cf. G54 van Dijk); *Fab.* 114, Ib and III Hausrath–Hunger.

<sup>22</sup> *Fabulae rhetoris anonymi Brancatiani* 1 Hausrath–Hunger; originally published by F. Sbordone, ‘Recensioni retoriche delle favole esopiane’, *RIGI* 16, Fasc. III–IV (1932), 35–68, at 38.

aligns herself with the cicada.<sup>23</sup> The insect proves an apt parallel for both the nature and consequences of her song: both singers produce an unwelcome, cacophonous din (expressed through the onomatopoeic sibilance of ψάλλω and the hard consonants of κρότος/κροτέω); and they are both examples of the limits and failings of singing: the cicada's music fails to secure any sustenance, while Cassandra's prophecy fails to persuade its audience (*Alex.* 1454–7). By alluding to this fable, Lycophron reinforces the distinctive aesthetic of his poem: it is not only a discordant racket, but also an account of a prophecy that is destined to fall on deaf ears.

Here too, however, Lycophron appears to be positioning himself squarely against Callimachus. Given the contents of this fable, the allusion invites a polemical reevaluation of the cicada from the *Aetia* prologue. The animal stood there as a symbol of pure, refined sound in comparison to the braying of donkeys (fr. 1.29–32), but Lycophron introduces another tradition in which the insect was a noisy nuisance: the cicada's κρότος proves uncomfortably close to asinine θόρυβος – a far cry from the λιγύς ἤχος celebrated by Callimachus.<sup>24</sup> Lycophron thus undermines Callimachean tradition by re-appropriating its strategies: as scholars have long recognized, the fable tradition is a significant element underlying Callimachus' programmatics, especially his contrast between the donkey and cicada (cf. 184

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<sup>23</sup> The *Codex Brancatianus* is a Byzantine collection, but – as with other fables – it is likely that older versions of this story circulated far earlier, especially given the numerous versions that survive today (see n. 21 above). For the history of Greek fable from archaic to Hellenistic times, see Adrados (n. 21) 1.139–714.

<sup>24</sup> The nouns κρότος and θόρυβος are often paired elsewhere: e.g. Dem. *Meid.* 14, *De falsa legatione* 195; Plut. *Pel.* 11.3, *Alex.* 38.5, *Phoc.* 19.3; Heliod. *Aeth.* 1.18.4, 10.15.1.

Perry).<sup>25</sup> But whereas Callimachus aligned himself with the cicada as an emblem of delicate song, Lycophron's Cassandra adopts the same bestial mascot for different ends: it has become a symbol of disruptive discord.<sup>26</sup> By echoing and inverting Callimachus' programmatic proclamations, Lycophron thus carves out his own distinctive and alternative aesthetic, centred on raucous noise: an apt metaphor for the linguistically obscure *Alexandra*. At both the outset and close of his poem, Lycophron positions himself agonistically against Callimachus' programmatic preferences.

Lycophron's aesthetic relationship with Callimachus is not restricted to the *Aetia* prologue, however. The guard's programmatic language can also be interpreted on a wider level as a response to Callimachus' more general criticisms of tragedy. At various points in his work (especially the *Iambi* and epigrams), Callimachus appears to disparage tragedy as an art

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<sup>25</sup> Callimachus and fable: B. Acosta-Hughes and R.S. Scodel, 'Aesop *poeta*: Aesop and the fable in Callimachus' *Iambi*', in M.A. Harder et al. (edd.), *Callimachus II* (Leuven, 2004), 1–21. Donkey and cicada: A. Ambühl, 'Callimachus and the Arcadian asses: the *Aitia* prologue and a lemma in the London scholion', *ZPE* 105 (1995), 209–13, at 211.

<sup>26</sup> The description of Dawn leaving her husband (Τιθωνὸν ... | λιποῦσα, 18–19) may also allude to the Callimachean cicada, recalling Tithonus' famous metamorphosis into that insect after being abandoned by Dawn in his old age. Yet here too Lycophron perverts the motif: this future cicada is denied 'wings' (contrast πτερόεις, *Aet.* fr. 1.32), which instead belong to the 'winged runner' of the guard's simile (πτηνός, 15) and Dawn's 'winged' steed, Pegasus (πτεροῖς, 17). Lycophron robs Callimachus' metapoetic emblem of one of its key attributes, winged lightness.

form.<sup>27</sup> In one epigram, he pictures a Dionysian mask yawning at the tedious repetition of popular tragic lines (*Epigr.* 48 Pf. = 26 Gow–Page = *AP* 6.310 – verse 6 quotes Eur. *Bacch.* 494). In an unplaced fragment of the *Iambi*, an unknown speaker claims that ‘the tragic actor didn’t rouse us yesterday’ – an unfavourable assessment of the genre’s emotional potential (οὐ πρῶν μὲν ἡμῖν ὁ τραγωδὸς ἤγειρε, fr. 219 Pf.). And in another epigram, he depicts a first-person speaker’s account of tragic failure (*Epigr.* 59 Pf./Gow–Page = *AP* 11.362); as Gow and Page conclude, ‘the way to lose your friends is to write drama’.<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to draw a coherent aesthetic from such contextless snippets, but even so the cumulative impression is that Callimachus scorned tragedy as a literary form. And from other poems it seems that this dislike was particularly rooted in the raucous noise and popular appeal of tragedy: in another unplaced fragment of the *Iambi*, we find a reference to ‘some bellowing, tragic Muse’ (ἦτις τραγωδὸς μοῦσα ληκυθίζουσα, fr. 215 Pf.), associating the sound of tragedy with somebody speaking into a *lekythos*.<sup>29</sup> Most revealing, however, is Callimachus’ assertion in *Iambus* 2 that tragedians ‘have the voice of those who inhabit the sea’ (οἱ δὲ τραγωδοὶ τῶν θάλασσαν

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<sup>27</sup> See R.F. Thomas, ‘New comedy, Callimachus, and Roman poetry’, *HSCP* 83 (1979), 179–206, at 181–90; M. Fantuzzi, ‘Epigram and the theater’, in P. Bing and J.S. Bruss (edd.), *Brill’s Companion to Hellenistic Epigram* (Leiden, 2007), 477–95, especially 477–87; A. Dale, ‘Dithyramb, tragedy, and Callimachus: the New Music and its reception’, in D. Castaldo et al. (edd.), *Poesia, musica e agoni nella Grecia antica* (Galatina, 2010–11) 1.369–84, at 378–82.

<sup>28</sup> A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1965), 2.211.

<sup>29</sup> The image recalls Aristophanes’ famous phrase ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν (*Ran.* 1200–48; cf. Hor. *Epist.* 1.3.14). See too Thomas (n. 27), 189–90 for the verb’s further possible association with triviality.

οἰ[κεύντων] | ἔχο[υ]σι φωνήν, fr. 192.12–13 Pf.). The meaning of this phrase has been disputed: some take it to refer to the muteness of fish, but a range of parallels and the larger context clearly favour a reference to their allegedly harsh and unmusical sound.<sup>30</sup> For Callimachus, tragedians match non-human fish in their inarticulate and grating noises, a foil to his own refined poetics. Lycophron, by contrast, champions the din of tragedy and embraces it as his *modus operandi*.

As a final element in this aesthetic dichotomy, we should also cite Callimachus' epigram on Theaetetus (*Epigr.* 7 Pf. = 57 Gow–Page = *AP* 9.565):

ἦλθε Θεαίτητος καθαρὴν ὁδόν. εἰ δ' ἐπὶ κισσόν  
τὸν τεὸν οὐχ αὕτη, Βάκχε, κέλευθος ἄγει,  
ἄλλων μὲν κήρυκες ἐπὶ βραχὺν οὔνομα καιρόν  
φθέγγονται, κείνου δ' Ἑλλάς ἀεὶ σοφίην.

Theaetetus travelled a pure path. If this road does not lead to your ivy wreath, Bacchus, heralds will proclaim the names of others for a short while, but Hellas will proclaim his wisdom forever.

In this epigram Callimachus acknowledges the popular appeal of Dionysiac art (here not only tragedy, but also dithyramb), marked by the ivy-clad road of its divine patron (Βάκχε) – it belongs to the domain of public heralds (κήρυκες). For all this appeal, however, the renown it

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<sup>30</sup> See P. Bing, 'The voice of those who live in the sea: Empedocles and Callimachus', *ZPE* 41 (1981), 33–36; Dale (n. 27), 380. Contrast A. Kerkhecker, *Callimachus' Book of Iambi* (Oxford, 1999), 54–8. For noisy fish, cf. Sen. *Apocol.* 5; Aelian *NA* 10.11.

bestows remains short-lived. Theaetetus, by contrast, will endure in memory by following a different ‘pure path’, not frequently trodden by the masses. The programmatic nature of this epigram is reinforced by its clear links with the *Aetia* prologue, not only in its concern for wisdom (σοφίην, v. 4 ~ σοφίην, *Aet.* fr. 1.18, both in the same *sedes*), but also in its assertion of the right kind of road to travel: the pure path (καθαρὴν ὁδόν) matches the prologue’s undefiled and untrodden route (fr. 1.25–8). The dismissal of Dionysus, moreover, parallels the prologue’s dismissal of the din of donkeys (fr. 1.30–2), an animal which was intimately connected with the god.<sup>31</sup> This epigram thus complements the programmatic polemic of the *Aetia* prologue, directing it specifically against the popular art of Dionysus. Indeed, reading both Callimachean texts together, we can gain a clear sense of an opposition between Callimachus’ pure and exclusive Apollo and the common and defiled Dionysus.

Here too we can see Lycophron’s prologue positioning itself against such polemic. The Callimachean reference to κήρυκες might make us think of the context of the *Alexandra*, spoken by an unnamed herald, while the *Alexandra*’s tangled hodological imagery contrasts strongly with the Callimachean ‘pure path’.<sup>32</sup> Most significantly, however, Lycophron does not distance himself from Dionysus, as Callimachus had: instead, Cassandra speaks from a programmatically ‘Bacchic mouth’ (ἡ δ’ ἔνθεον σχάσσασα βακχεῖον στόμα, 28). Whereas Callimachus had opposed the Dionysiac in his epigram and favoured the Apolline in the *Aetia*

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ambühl (n. 25), 211–12.

<sup>32</sup> The epigram’s ὁδόν provides a parallel to Lycophron’s διεξόδους (14) – the only road image in the *Alexandra* prologue which does not find a lexical equivalent in the *Aetia* prologue. Moreover, the Lycophronic path requires a εὐμαθῆς τρίβος (11), a foil to Callim. *Epigr.* 48 Pf. (= 26 Gow–Page) where εὐμαθίη has been reduced to the school learning of tragedy (cf. Fantuzzi [n. 27], 481–2).

prologue, Lycophron collapses the opposition between these two gods, embracing the influence of both: the prologue begins with Apollo (6) and closes with Dionysus (28).<sup>33</sup> The *Alexandra*, therefore, self-consciously unravels Callimachus' polarized poetics: it embodies both Bacchus and Apollo, both Dionysiac noise and Apolline inspiration.<sup>34</sup> Through repeated engagement with Callimachean purple patches, Lycophron thus articulates a different aesthetic from that of his Alexandrian predecessor: one that embraces the boisterous noise of tragedy and aims for literary grandeur. Indeed, we may even see his rebellion against the Callimachean tradition mirrored and thematized by Cassandra's own rejection of Callimachus' patron god, Apollo (cf. *Alex.* 1457).

#### A PRE-SCRIPTED AESTHETIC: 'LYCOPHRON' AND RHETORICAL FRIGIDITY

However, the *Alexandra* should not – and cannot – be viewed purely through a Callimachean lens. Such a framework is overly restrictive and prevents us from seeing many other aspects of

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. C. Kossai, 'Poétique messager. Quelques remarques sur l'incipit et l'épilogue de l'*Alexandra* de Lycophron', in Cusset and Prioux, 141–59, at 145, further noting *Alex.* 1464, where Cassandra is called a bacchant from Claros (Κλάρου Μιμαλλῶν), 'une expression oxymorique qui l'associe à la fois à Apollon, dieu de Claros en Ionie, et à Dionysos, maître des ménades'; cf. Looijenga (n. 7), 68.

<sup>34</sup> Similarly, McNelis and Sens, 64–6 note how the *Alexandra* collapses the *Aetia* prologue's distinction between Aeschylean and Euripidean styles of poetry; though Callimachus' prologue already deconstructs this opposition: T.J. Nelson, 'The shadow of Aristophanes: Hellenistic poetry's reception of comic poetics', in M.A. Harder et al. (edd.), *Drama and Performance in Hellenistic Poetry* (Leuven, 2018), 225–71, at 250.

Lycophron’s work. As we have noted above, the poem can be – and has indeed been – subjected to other aesthetic interpretations through completely different frames of reference, such as Sistakou’s analogy of late European Romanticism. In the second half of this chapter, we wish to take the poem in yet another direction, by exploring how it constructs an alternative literary historical framework beyond Callimachus, drawing especially on the earlier literary criticism of Aristotle. The key to this interpretation lies in the name of the poem’s author, ‘Lycophron’.

As is well known, names and naming play a major part in the obscure and riddling style of the *Alexandra*. Rarely does Lycophron name a person, place or god directly: instead, he intimates identities through a range of epithets, metaphors, analogies, periphrases, kennings, synecdoches, metonymies and more.<sup>35</sup> The poet’s interest in onomastics is reflected in the numerous -ώνυμος compounds that scatter the poem, exploring how names are shaped and changed over time.<sup>36</sup> And even when figures are named directly, questions of identity and status remain: the Cyprian heroes Cepheus and Praxandrus, for example, are pointedly called ‘a nameless brood, not leaders of a naval expedition’ (Κηφεύς δὲ καὶ Πράξανδρος, οὐ ναυκληρίας | λαῶν ἄνακτες, ἀλλ’ ἀνώνυμοι σποραί, 586–7); they are only named directly

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<sup>35</sup> See e.g. M.G. Ciani, “‘Scritto con mistero’: osservazioni sull’oscurità di Licofrone”, *GIF* 25 (1973), 132–48; G. Lambin, *L’Alexandra de Lycophron* (Rennes, 2005), 233–83; C. Cusset, ‘Les détournements du nom propre: l’exemple de Lycophron,’ in *Lalies: Actes des sessions de linguistique et de littérature* (Paris, 2007), 199–212; E. Sistakou, ‘Breaking the name codes in Lycophron’s *Alexandra*’, in Cusset and Prioux, 237–58.

<sup>36</sup> φερώνυμος, 164, 599, 1081; οὐλαμώνυμος, 183; ἀνώνυμος, 587; ἐπώνυμος, 723, 1004, 1031; νώνυμος, 1126; ὁμώνυμος, 1370. Cf. οὔνομ’, 339, 370. See Hornblower (n. 1), 158 on *Alex.* 164.

here because they have never featured in the literary tradition before.<sup>37</sup> Individual names can also carry much significance within the poem: Lycophron's use of the name 'Alexandra', for example, rather than the more familiar 'Cassandra', invites a false-etymology (derived from ἀ-λέξω), foregrounding the poem's central themes of miscommunication and mediated language. We never hear Cassandra's voice directly; she is indeed 'without speech'.<sup>38</sup> Even from this brief survey, it is clear that the *Alexandra* is deeply engaged in questions of names, their meaning, and their interplay with individuals' identity. It is a poem that is self-consciously and deeply attuned to onomastics.

One name that has received far less attention in modern scholarship, however, is that attributed to the poet of the poem: 'Lycophron'. Traditionally, this name has been understood to refer to Lycophron of Chalcis, the Ptolemaic playwright and scholar. However, such an attribution was already doubted in the scholia to the *Alexandra* (Λυκόφρονος ἐτέρου νομιστέον εἶναι τὸ ποίημα, οὐ τοῦ {συγ}γράψαντος τὴν τραγωδίαν, schol. *Alex.* 1226, p. 226.5–6 Leone) and with good reason: most ancient sources merely ascribe the poem to an unspecified 'Lycophron', and it is only a handful of late *testimonia* (Tzetzes and the *Suda*) that

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<sup>37</sup> Lycophron acknowledges the pair's absence from the Homeric Catalogue of Ships: schol. *Alex.* 586, pp. 116.14–117.5 Leone; Tzetz. *Alex.* 586, pp. 201.9–202.3 Scheer. Other named figures are similarly secondary or otherwise unattested characters: Sistakou (n. 35), 244 n. 19, 249.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. M. Fusillo, A. Hurst and G. Paduano, *Licofrone: Alessandra* (Milan, 1991), 31; C. Cusset, 'Dit et non-dit dans l'*Alexandra* de Lycophron', in M.A. Harder et al. (edd.), *Hellenistic Poetry Beyond the Canon* (Leuven, 2006), 43–60, 45 with n. 13. Note too the juxtaposition Ἀλεξάνδρα λόγων at the end of the prologue (*Alex.* 30): McNelis and Sens, 51.

directly identify this figure with the Ptolemaic poet.<sup>39</sup> In any case, the ascription to the Chalcidian is impossible to maintain if the poem dates from the start of the second century B.C.E., as we believe.<sup>40</sup> It should thus be viewed with considerable scepticism. Most previous scholars who have accepted the later dating of the poem conclude that we can know nothing more about its actual author, and that the *Alexandra*, like many other works in antiquity, is simply pseudonymous: it may or may not have been composed by some unknown ‘Lycophron’.<sup>41</sup> In this contribution, however, we would like to propose an alternative solution

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<sup>39</sup> ὁ Λυκόφρων οὐτοσὶ τῶ μὲν γένει Χαλκιδεύς (Tzetz. *Alex.*, p. 4.25 Scheer; cf. Tzetz. *Alex.* 817, p. 257.10 Scheer); Λυκόφρων, Χαλκιδεύς ἀπὸ Εὐβοίας ... ἔγραψε καὶ τὴν καλουμένην Ἀλεξάνδραν, τὸ σκοτεινὸν ποίημα (*Suda* s.v., λ 827 Adler). The ascription in the *Suda* is appended to the end of Lycophron’s entry after a list of his tragedies – almost as an after-thought. Other *testimonia* are prosopographically imprecise: e.g. *latebrasque Lycophronis atri* (Stat. *Silv.* 5.3.157); ἡ τοῦ Λυκόφρονος Ἀλεξάνδρα (Lucian, *Lexiphanes* 25); παρὰ Λυκόφρονι ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξάνδρᾳ (Artem. 4.63). For a survey of *testimonia*, see A. Berra, ‘*Obscuritas lycophronea: les témoignages anciens sur Lycophron*’, in Cusset and Prioux, 259–318, at 271–314.

<sup>40</sup> For other proposed identifications, see e.g. Lambin (n. 35), 20–4, who posits a different third-century Lycophron, the son of Lycus of Rhegium; and K. Ziegler, ‘Lykophron der Tragiker und die Alexandrafrage’, *R.–E.* 13 (1927), 2316–81, at 2381, who supposes that the poet may be the homonymous grandson of the Ptolemaic tragedian.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. Hornblower (n. 1), 39–41; McNelis and Sens, 11. P.M. Fraser, ‘Lycophron (2)’, in *OCD*<sup>3</sup> (Oxford, 2003), 895–6, at 896 considers the name a ‘deliberate pseudepigraphon’ which offers an ‘ironic reminiscence’ of Lycophron of Chalcis, but he does not explain this irony.

to this problem of authorial identity, one which simultaneously enriches our appreciation of the poem's aesthetic positioning.

We propose that the transmitted ascription to 'Lycophron' is in fact a pen name adopted by the poem's original author to embody and advertise his stylistic affiliation. It does not primarily associate the *Alexandra* with the famous Alexandrian playwright, an association which presumably only developed later (as the general lack of specificity in our earlier *testimonia* may suggest): given the Chalcidian's reputation for tragedy, scholarship and wordplay, he was a plausible candidate for anybody who wanted to attach a concrete personality to the poem.<sup>42</sup> Instead, we propose that the author of the poem pseudonymously adopted the name 'Lycophron' to evoke an earlier literary namesake from the classical period: Lycophron the sophist (83 DK = 38 Laks–Most). Little is known of this figure today. An allusion in a pseudo-Platonic letter suggests that he may have resided at the court of Dionysius II in Sicily during the early fourth century B.C.E. (*Epist.* 2.314d1–5), but this reference has often been suspected and we otherwise know nothing about his life. Yet he was evidently an author of considerable repute in antiquity: Aristotle cites him repeatedly in a wide range of works – in a wider range, in fact, than he mentions other 'sophists' more familiar to us, such as Gorgias (*Metaph.* 1045b; *Pol.* 1280b; *Ph.* 185b; *Rhet.* 1405b, 1406a; *Soph. el.* 174b; *Nob.* fr. 91 Rose).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The Chalcidian was a member of the Ptolemaic Pleiad of tragedians (100 *TrGF*; A. Kotlińska-Toma, *Hellenistic Tragedy* (London, 2015), 74–90), wrote a treatise on comedy in at least eleven books (περὶ κωμωδίας; cf. *Ath.* 2.485d) and was famous for his anagrams (Ἰον Ἦρας for Ἀρσινόη; ἀπὸ μέλιτος for Πτολεμαῖος; cf. Tzetz. *Alex.*, p. 5.6–7 Scheer = *SH* 531).

<sup>43</sup> S. Giombini, 'Lycophron: a minor sophist or a minor Socratic?', *Philosophical Inquiry* 40 (2016), 74–94 offers a recent survey of the sophistic Lycophron, noting the frequency of

Most citations concern Lycophron’s views on politics and metaphysics, but several provide significant insight into his more literary pursuits. In *De Sophisticis Elenchis* (174b), we hear that the sophist was a refined rhetorician, skilfully able to rebrand a topic about which he had little material, as when he was asked to praise a lyre. According to the gloss of Alexander of Aphrodisias, he praised the lyre for only a short while, before turning to the eponymous constellation, ‘Lyra’, a topic on which he was far better equipped.<sup>44</sup> Judging by this anecdote, he was evidently well attuned to the polysemous potential of language.

Most significantly for us, however, he is also cited in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* as a prime example of rhetorical frigidity, the *locus classicus* for ancient discussions of stylistic ψυχρότης (*Rhet.* 1405b35–1407a18).<sup>45</sup> Aristotle specifies four elements of speech which contribute to such frigidity: the use of compound words (τοῖς διπλοῖς ὀνόμασιν), obsolete or unusual words (γλώτταις), epithets that are overly long, unseasonable or too crowded (τοῖς ἐπιθέτοις τὸ ἢ μακροῖς ἢ ἀκαίροις ἢ πυκνοῖς χρῆσθαι), and metaphors (μεταφοραῖς). To exemplify these stylistic flaws, he draws illustrations from three sophists: Gorgias, Alcidamas and – crucially

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Aristotle’s citations at pp. 79–80; cf. too J. Vahlen, ‘Der Sophist Lykophron’, *RhM* 21 (1866), 143–46; H. Hofmann, ‘Lykophron der Sophist’, *R.-E. Suppl.* 14 (1974), 265–72; A. Laks and G.W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 9.120–131.

<sup>44</sup> Alex. Aphr. on Arist. *Soph. el.* 15.174b30, *CAG* II. 3, 118.31–119.3. However, this gloss may simply be Alexander’s own hypothesis: Laks and Most (n. 43), 9.120, 129 n. 1.

<sup>45</sup> On ψυχρότης as a critical concept, see L. van Hook, “Ψυχρότης ἢ τὸ ψυχρόν”, *CP* 12 (1917), 68–76; K. Gutzwiller, *ψυχρός und ὄγκος. Untersuchungen zur rhetorischen Terminologie* (Diss. Basel, 1969); M.E. Wright, *The Comedian as Critic: Greek Old Comedy and Poetics* (London, 2012), 108–10.

– Lycophron, whose work provides examples of the first two categories (*Rhet.* 1405b35–1406a10):

τὰ δὲ ψυχρὰ ἐν τέτταρσι γίγνεται κατὰ τὴν λέξιν, ἓν τε τοῖς διπλοῖς ὀνόμασιν, οἷον Λυκόφρων ‘τὸν πολυπρόσωπον οὐρανὸν τῆς μεγαλοκορύφου γῆς’, καὶ ‘ἀκτὴν δὲ στενοπόρον’, καὶ ὡς Γοργίας ὠνόμαζεν ‘πτωχομουσοσόκλοκας ἐπιορκήσαντας καὶ κατευορκήσαντας’, καὶ ὡς Ἀλκιδάμας ‘μένους μὲν τὴν ψυχὴν πληρουμένην, πυρίχρων δὲ τὴν ὄψιν γιγνομένην’, καὶ ‘τελεσφόρον ᾤθη τὴν προθυμίαν αὐτῶν γενήσεσθαι’, καὶ ‘τελεσφόρον τὴν πειθῶ τῶν λόγων κατέστησεν’, καὶ ‘κυανόχρων τὸ τῆς θαλάττης ἔδαφος’· πάντα ταῦτα γὰρ ποιητικὰ διὰ τὴν δίπλωσιν φαίνεται.

μία μὲν οὖν αὕτη αἰτία, μία δὲ τὸ χρῆσθαι γλώτταις, οἷον Λυκόφρων Ζέρξην ‘πέλωρον ἄνδρα’, καὶ Σκίρων ‘σίσις ἀνὴρ’, καὶ Ἀλκιδάμας ‘ἄθυρμα τῆ ποιήσει’, καὶ ‘τὴν τῆς φύσεως ἀτασθαλίαν’, καὶ ‘ἀκράτῳ τῆς διανοίας ὀργῆ τεθηγμένον’.

Frigidity of style comes about in four ways: first, through compound words, such as Lycophron’s ‘the many-faced heaven of the mighty-peaked earth’ and ‘the narrow-straited shore’; Gorgias too used to speak of ‘beggar-Muse-flatterers, false-oath-swearers and good-oath-swearers’; and Alcidas has ‘his soul filling with anger, his face turning fire-hued’, and ‘he thought their zeal would be fulfilment-bringing’, and ‘he made the persuasion of his words fulfilment-bringing’, and ‘the azure-hued floor of the sea’. These all seem poetic because of their compound form.

So this is one cause of frigidity. Another is the use of rare words, such as Lycophron’s description of Xerxes as ‘a gargantuan man’ and of Sciron as ‘a scourge

of a man’; Alcidas too has ‘bibelots for poetry’, ‘the effrontery of nature’, and ‘whetted by his mind’s unadulterated ire’.

In Aristotle’s opinion, the sophistic Lycophron stood alongside Gorgias and Alcidas as an archetype of rhetorical frigidity. He was known for his elaborate compound words, such as ‘many-faced’ heaven (πολυπρόσωπον), ‘mighty-peaked’ earth (μεγαλοκορύφου) and the ‘narrow-straited’ shore (στενοπόρον); and also for his use of unusual and recherché lexical items, describing Xerxes as ‘a gargantuan man’ (πέλωρον ἄνδρα) and Sciron as ‘a scourge of a man’ (σίνις ἀνήρ). From this passage of Aristotle, it seems that the name ‘Lycophron’ was already larded with a host of aesthetic associations by the fourth century: the name was ripe to become a buzzword for the ‘frigid’ style.

From this literary background, the ascription of the *Alexandra* to a ‘Lycophron’ gains considerable point: Aristotle’s four stylistic traits of rhetorical ‘frigidity’ map perfectly onto core aspects of the poem’s design.<sup>46</sup> It too, is characterized by elaborate compound words, many of which are *hapax* or *proton legomena*, such as λυκαινομόρφων (‘wolf-transforming’, 481) and κρατοβρώτος (‘brain-eating’, 1066).<sup>47</sup> It is replete with a wide range of γλῶτται,

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. already Lambin (n. 35), 261–3, who cites this passage as a ‘guide’ to explore the *Alexandra*’s stylistic features but fails to dwell on its larger significance or the prominence of the sophistic Lycophron.

<sup>47</sup> On Lycophron’s lexical creativity, see N. Guilleux, ‘La fabrique des *hapax* et des *proton legomena* dans l’*Alexandra*, entre connivence et cryptage’, in Cusset and Prioux, 221–36. Among the poem’s 3,000 or so words, 518 are *hapax legomena* and 117 *proton legomena*: Ziegler (n. 40), 2343–8. Such lexical creativity resonates with the Gorgianic sophists’ interest in the power of language.

including foreign borrowings (e.g. the Egyptian βᾶριν, 747) and rarities of the literary tradition (e.g. τιθαιβώσσοντος, 622, cf. *Od.* 13.106).<sup>48</sup> It contains numerous strings of lengthy and elaborate epithets, especially in reference to the gods (e.g. Athena: Τριγέννητος θεὰ | Βοαρμία Λογγᾶτις Ὀμολωῖς Βία, 519–20).<sup>49</sup> And it frequently mentions heroes and places through the obscuring veil of metaphor (such as the sequence of birds and fish used to characterize Cassandra’s assailant, Locrian Ajax).<sup>50</sup> In the past, scholars have considered many possible precedents for these stylistic elements, including Aeschylean tragedy, dithyrambic New Music and oracular literature.<sup>51</sup> But alongside these various influences, we should now set the ‘frigid’ style of classical rhetoric.<sup>52</sup> The *Alexandra* epitomizes all four of Aristotle’s

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<sup>48</sup> Foreign words: Hornblower (n. 1), 53. Homeric rarities: A. Rengakos, ‘Lycophron als Homererklärer’, *ZPE* 102 (1994), 111–30.

<sup>49</sup> For the historical and literary significance of such epithets, see Hornblower (n. 1), 62–93; McNelis and Sens, 38–46.

<sup>50</sup> Ajax is pictured as a vulture (τόργου, 357–8), kingfisher (κηρύλον, 387), seabream (φάγρον, 388), cuckoo (κόκκυγα, 395) and dolphin (δελφῖνος, 397). Lambin (n. 35), 233–60 provides a useful catalogue of metaphors in the *Alexandra*, with further discussion.

<sup>51</sup> Aeschylus: S.R. West, ‘Notes on the text of Lycophron’, *CQ* 33 (1983), 114–35, at 114. New Music: McNelis and Sens, 15–22, 59. Oracles: S.R. West, ‘Lycophron’s *Alexandra*: “Hindsight as foresight makes no sense?”’, in M. Depew and D. Obbink (edd.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 153–66. Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1458a21–31 on the overuse of metaphor resulting in a riddle (ἀίνιγμα) or non-Greek noise (βαρβαρισμός).

<sup>52</sup> These categories of influence are not completely separate: Aristotle himself associated noisy (ψοφώδεις) dithyrambists with the ‘frigid’ style through their use of compound words (*Rhet.*

defining criteria for this aesthetic, pushing them to their extremes. Aristotle comments that these stylistic features verge on the poetic when used in excess (ἀλλ' ἄν πολύ, πάντως ποιητικόν, *Rhet.* 1406b1; ποιητικῶς γὰρ ἄγαν, 1406b10–11); but by taking them to an even greater extreme, the *Alexandra* has become hyper-frigid and hyper-poetic, near impenetrable in its language. What for Aristotle was a stylistic flaw ('frigidity') has here become the poem's key compositional strategy. In its ascription to 'Lycophron', we suggest that the poem self-consciously acknowledges this rhetorical precedent, situating itself within the same 'frigid' tradition as the classical sophist. In looking back to Aristotle's criticisms, the poem embodies and positively reappraises rhetorical frigidity: the ascription serves as a pen name, marking the poem's aesthetic affiliation.

Such an argument is bolstered by the widespread use of pen names and artistic aliases in antiquity.<sup>53</sup> Already in the archaic age, we could cite the precedent of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, a poem which famously fashions itself as a 'Homeric' composition through allusion to the Homeric biographical tradition (especially *Hom. Hym. Ap.* 3.166–76).<sup>54</sup> But a closer parallel in time is provided by the *Tabulae Iliacae*, some of which are inscribed with epigrams that assign the work to 'Theodorean *technê*'. In the past, these attributions prompted numerous speculations surrounding the identity of the tablets' artist(s) or inscriptions' author(s), akin to

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3.3, 1406b1–2; cf. Demetr. *Eloc.* 116). In the following paragraphs, however, we consider the *Alexandra*'s broader associations with stylistic frigidity and the sophistic Lycophron in particular.

<sup>53</sup> On allusive names and aliases in the Hellenistic period, see J.H. Klooster, *Poetry as Window and Mirror: Positioning the Poet in Hellenistic Poetry* (Leiden, 2011), 188–94.

<sup>54</sup> M.L. West, 'The invention of Homer', *CQ* 49 (1999), 364–82, at 368–72; B. Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge, 2002), 62–6.

those which have plagued the composer of the *Alexandra*.<sup>55</sup> But in recent years, Michael Squire has plausibly re-interpreted the evidence, arguing that these attributions serve as a pen name, marking allegiance to the style of the archaic craftsman Theodorus of Samos, who was renowned for his miniature artistic inventions (Plin. *HN* 34.83; Posidippus 67 A.–B.).<sup>56</sup> By alluding to this stylistic precedent, the tablets acknowledge their status as refined, small-scale compositions, situating themselves within a pre-existing artistic tradition. In a similar manner, the pen name of the *Alexandra* positions the poem within a prior literary history of frigid composition: Lycophron’s Hellenistic trimeters embody and exaggerate features of a pre-existing and much-maligned literary aesthetic.<sup>57</sup> In its bulky, figurative and foreignizing language, the poem simply ‘does what it says on the tin’. It fulfils the literary expectations raised by the poem’s alleged authorship.<sup>58</sup>

Besides this general stylistic continuity, the two Aristotelian quotations concerning γλωτται exhibit further significant parallels with the work of our Hellenistic Lycophron. First,

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<sup>55</sup> See N. Valenzuela Montenegro, *Die Tabulae Iliacae: Mythos und Geschichte im Spiegel einer Gruppe frühkaiserzeitlicher Miniaturreliefs* (Berlin, 2004), 350–8; M. Squire, *The Iliad in a Nutshell: Visualizing Epic on the Tabulae Iliacae* (Cambridge, 2011), 285.

<sup>56</sup> M. Squire, ‘Texts on the tables: the *Tabulae Iliacae* in their Hellenistic literary context’, *JHS* 130 (2010), 67–96, at 84–90; Squire (n. 55), 283–302.

<sup>57</sup> For other criticisms of ψυχρότης, see [Longinus], *Subl.* 4; Demetr. *Eloc.* 114–27.

<sup>58</sup> A sceptical reader might object that ‘Lycophron’ is too a common a name to bear such a precise and allusive significance (see the various entries in the *LGPN* (Oxford, 1987–), including e.g. forty Lycophrons from Attica, vol. II). However, the sophist’s reputation (through Aristotle) as a literary personality would have strengthened the link, and the erudition required to decode the pen name is no different to that demanded by the rest of the poem.

the description of Sciron involves onomastic wordplay which mirrors that which we later find in the *Alexandra*. In myth, Sciron was one of the notorious bandits that ranged the Attic countryside, forcing travellers to wash his feet before kicking them into the sea: his designation as a ‘scourge of a man’ (σίνις ἀνήρ) is thus extremely appropriate.<sup>59</sup> As Aristotle recognized, however, the noun σίνις (‘scourge’/‘ravager’, here used in apposition) was an extremely rare poeticism: it is only previously attested in the manuscripts of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (λέοντα σίνιν, *Ag.* 717–18),<sup>60</sup> and in a verse attributed to Sophocles’ *Thamyras* (Αὐτόλυκον, πολέων κτεάνων σίνιν Ἄργεϊ κοίλω, fr. 242.2 *TrGF*).<sup>61</sup> More commonly, the word served as a proper noun, referring to another mythical Attic bandit, Sinis, who – like Sciron – preyed on unwary

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<sup>59</sup> Sciron: Apollod. *Epit.* 1.2–3; Diod. Sic. 4.59.4; Hyg. *Fab.* 38; Paus. 1.44.8; Plut. *Thes.* 10.1. The myth seems to have been popular among Hellenistic poets, e.g. Callim. *Hecale* fr. 59–60 Hollis; Euphorion fr. 11.6–9 Lightfoot.

<sup>60</sup> Most modern editors of Aeschylus accept Conington’s conjecture (λέοντος ἴνιν), but the Hellenistic pedigree of the manuscript reading seems to be confirmed by several allusions:λέοντα ... σίνιν, Callim. *Hymn* 2.91–2; σίνιν, *Alex.* 539 (of Paris, as perhaps in Aeschylus); cf. too σίνις, Anyte 11.3 Gow–Page = *AP* 7.202.3. Cf. F. Williams, *Callimachus, Hymn to Apollo: A Commentary* (Oxford, 1978), 79.

<sup>61</sup> Given the hexameter form and possible corruption in the Sophoclean scholia, some scholars have supposed that the verse actually derives from the *Epigoni*, either the cyclic epic (fr. 8.2 Bernabé), or a poem of that title by Antimachus (J.U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* [Oxford, 1925], 247). But this is unlikely: M. Davies, *The Theban Epics* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 145.

wayfarers, catapulting them into the sky from a bent pine tree.<sup>62</sup> By using the rare word to describe Sciron, the sophistic Lycophron thus collapsed the two mythical figures into a single reference, emphasising their similarity. After all, both bandits were punished by Theseus with a taste of their own medicine – Sciron hurled into the sea, and Sinis into the air. They are mythical doublets of each other, a point which Lycophron’s phrasing implicitly acknowledges.<sup>63</sup> Such a condensed allusion gives us a taste of the sophist’s mythical mastery and allusive sophistication. Crucially for our purposes, however, this onomastic blurring is also a familiar feature of Lycophron’s *Alexandra*, in which characters are often figuratively described through the names of others, as when Agamemnon is presented as Zeus (1124–5, 1369–71) and Zeus in turn as Agamemnon (335); they too are doublets of each other, one ruling on earth, the other in heaven. In already transferring names and blurring identities centuries earlier, the sophistic Lycophron provides significant precedent for the indirect and allusive onomastics of the *Alexandra*.

Most striking of all, however, is the sophistic Lycophron’s description of Xerxes as a gigantic figure, a ‘gargantuan man’ (πέλωρον ἄνδρα, Arist. *Rhet.* 1406a7–8). The Persian tyrant is described in a similar manner in the *Alexandra* itself (*Alex.* 1413–16):<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Sinis: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.16.2; Hyg. *Fab.* 38; Plut. *Thes.* 8.2. For an alternative version in which Sinis’ victims were torn in two between two pine trees, see Diod. Sic. 4.59.2–3; Paus. 2.1.4.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. the frequency with which the pair are juxtaposed elsewhere in literature, e.g. Bacchyl. 18.20–2, 24–5; Eur. *Hipp.* 977–80; Ov. *Met.* 7.440–7.

<sup>64</sup> On the *Alexandra*’s frequent recourse to Gigantomachic imagery, see F.-H. Massa-Pairault, ‘Lycophron et les Géants’, in Cusset and Prioux, 487–505. Xerxes appears to have been a favourite sophistic subject: cf. Gorgias’ description of the king as the ‘Persian Zeus’ (ὁ τῶν Περσῶν Ζεὺς, [Longinus], *Subl.* 3.2 = 82 B5a DK = 32 D30a Laks–Most; cf. Hdt. 7.56).

ἀλλ' ἀντὶ πάντων Περσέως ἕνα σποράς  
στελεῖ γίγαντα, τῷ θάλασσα μὲν βατή  
πεζῷ ποτ' ἔσται, γῆ δὲ ναυσθλωθήσεται  
ρήσσουντι πηδοῖς χέρσον.

Yet Epimetheus' mother will not yield; in return for everything, she will send forth a **single giant** from the race of Perseus, who will one day walk over the sea on foot, and sail over the earth, breaking open the dry land with oars.

In the work of both Lycophrons, Xerxes was a gigantic, more-than-human figure. Like σίνις, πέλωρος is a rare poeticism, but here of epic rather than tragic pedigree. In archaic and classical epic, it was regularly used of monsters and giants, to which Xerxes is thus equated.<sup>65</sup> Admittedly, our absence of the wider context for the sophist's statement makes broader conclusions difficult, and it is possible that both authors were simply drawing independently on a wider analogical tradition of using the gigantomachy to articulate cultural and political

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<sup>65</sup> The adjective is used of Gaia (Hes. *Theog.* 159, 173, etc.), Echidna (*Theog.* 295, 299), Typhoeus (*Theog.* 845, 856), Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.257), Gorgons (*Il.* 5.741, *Od.* 11.634, etc.), and dangerous animals, including the Nemean lion (Panyassis fr. 5 Bernabé) and snakes (*Il.* 12.220). The only earlier non-epic appearances are Theogn. 9 (again of Gaia) and Pind. fr. 70db.8 S.–M. (extremely fragmentary).

oppositions.<sup>66</sup> But the resemblance is certainly striking, and suggests that Aristotle’s sophist may have been a model for the poet of the *Alexandra* in more than just style alone.

We therefore propose that the original poet of the *Alexandra* adopted ‘Lycophron’ as a pen name, aligning the poem with a pre-determined ‘frigid’ literary aesthetic. We are not, of course, the first to mention these namesakes in the same breath: already in antiquity, an anonymous commentator on Aristotle attempted to clarify this passage of the *Rhetoric* by remarking that it refers to ‘another Lycophron and not the poet’ (Λυκόφρων ἄλλος καὶ οὐχ ὁ ποιητής).<sup>67</sup> Rather than drawing such a sharp distinction between the two, however, we believe it is better to see the poet of the *Alexandra* building on the reputation and stylistic associations of his predecessor. The poem’s ascription advertises its aesthetic credentials. Moreover, if scholars are right to situate the poet of the *Alexandra* in a South Italian context and to locate the sophistic Lycophron within the Sicilian school of rhetoric headed by Gorgias, we might even see some local pride in this implicit affiliation: both ‘Lycophrons’ would then be situated within the same geographical environment, and the poet of the *Alexandra* would be establishing

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. T.J. Nelson, ‘Beating the Galatians: ideologies, analogies and allegories in Hellenistic literature and art’, in A. Coşkun (ed.), *Galatian Victories and Other Studies into the Agency and Identity of the Galatians in the Hellenistic and Early-Roman Periods* (Leuven, forthcoming). Xerxes’ great size is already stressed by Herodotus (μεγάθεος, 7.187.2): Hornblower (n. 1), 489.

<sup>67</sup> *Anonymi in Aristotelis Artem rhetoricam* III. 3 (f. 55r 16–17), *CAG* XII. 2, 174.24–6. See Berra (n. 39), 272–3 and 315 (Annexe 1.2) for further cases of possible Byzantine confusion between the different Lycophrons.

his literary identity through specifically local precedent.<sup>68</sup> Admittedly, such geographical overlap can be no more than speculation on current evidence, and it is worth acknowledging how little we in fact know of the sophist beyond Aristotle's citations. But in some respects, the obscure identity of this earlier author is a perfect complement to the obscure style of the *Alexandra* itself. The poet's name is the ultimate 'name-code' throughout the whole poem, embodying its stylistic frigidity. However much the *Alexandra* plays against Callimachus' poetic programme, therefore, it must also be situated within a far broader literary history – and its deep affiliation with rhetorical frigidity demonstrates a further strand of its aesthetic range.

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<sup>68</sup> On the South Italian *Alexandra*, see Hornblower (n. 1), 47–9; id., *Lykophron's Alexandra, Rome, and the Hellenistic World* (Oxford, 2018). The association of the sophistic Lycophron and Gorgias' Sicilian school goes back at least to E. Zeller, *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. II: From the Earliest Period to the Time of Socrates* (tr. S.F. Alleyne) (London, 1881), 425 n. 3; though now see the caution of Giombini (n. 43).