Callimachus and His Muses. Contextualization in the *Aetia*

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Abstract

This contribution looks at the Muses in books 1–2 of Callimachus' Aetia as a contextualizing element. On the one hand the Muses provide a connection to the Greek epical tradition and to Hesiod, where they appear as a source of knowledge and inspiration. On the other hand, they appear as written books and allegories of reading, thus pointing to the new reality of literate poetry in the Library of Alexandria. By virtue of this double function, the Muses thus provide a generic and communicative context that helps readers of this new type of poetry see the Aetia as both traditional and innovative.

As any scholar will know, "context" is a difficult concept: depending on, well, context, it can mean (among other things) the external reality in which a linguistic utterance is embedded and to which it refers or the larger texture that holds the elements of a literary text together. It is a word that we all have used numerous times in teaching when we explain to our students that certain interpretations are less convincing because they fail to take the (historical, social, political, generic, linguistic, philosophical, religious …) context into account. As is often the case, the importance of a feature becomes especially perceptible when it is lacking. As classicists, we are accustomed to working with fragments, parts of larger entities that become problematic because we are missing important contextual information. A papyrus scrap with only a few words of a poem by Sappho, an enigmatic quotation of a sentence or two of a Presocratic philosopher, or the discontinuous text of a palimpsest manuscript all resist our desire to understand, to "make sense" of the text since their fragmentary nature has made the context inaccessible. In an important contribution, Most [34] has given a convincing analysis of this process of decontextualization and provided the following definition of interpretation [34:132]:

> […] interpretation is nothing other than recontextualization, the elaboration of hypothetical external contexts within which problematic texts can be embedded in such a way that coherent and detailed analysis of them can derive their peculiarities from determinate features of these postulated contexts. |

Such attempts at recontextualization try to take into account as much external evidence as we possess – but in the end, there will always be an element of subjectivity and intuition about what contexts we consider plausible and helpful for understanding fragmentary texts.

The contingencies of transmission are not the only way texts become decontextualized. As Most himself writes [34:131]: "publication […] guarantees that a text will fall into the hands of people who have no idea of its original external context." Of course, this was already known in antiquity, and the famous critique of writing in Plato's *Phaedrus* mentions that written texts become helpless to "defend themselves" because they are separated from their "father" (275 e). This "separation" from the author inevitably decontextualizes texts as it removes them from the living voice of the performer, from the (ritual, civic, generic, or political) frame of the performance, and from the shared experience of the audience. Literary traditions provide new contexts for written texts, but when this form of publication was a relatively recent phenomenon, its effects were felt more acutely.

Plato's engagement with writing and teaching via written texts occurs precisely at the moment in Greek cultural history when a poetic tradition that was primarily based on oral performance became gradually supplemented and replaced by a literary culture that emphasized composition in writing and private consumption of written texts.[1]

This contribution will explore a text that is decontextualized in both senses. Callimachus' *Aetia* exerted a huge influence on the development of Greek and Latin poetry; its famous prologue is quoted, alluded to, and parodied numerous times in ancient literature.[2] Unfortunately, the text itself has not come down to us in medieval manuscripts, but only in ancient quotations, numerous papyrus fragments, and imitations and translations. Moreover, Callimachus was perhaps the first poet-writer for whom the poetical tradition consisted primarily of a library of written texts, of papyrus rolls. His own poetry is thus an early example of the modes of composition and of anticipated reception that were to dominate Western literature for many centuries to come: Callimachus was keenly aware that he was writing his texts for readers who might be geographically and chronologically remote from himself. This meant that the immediate | social (political, religious, festive) context of poetry, which had hitherto been provided by the performance of singers and dancers, was no longer available for his texts. This raised a number of problems and challenges to which Callimachus responded: he discovered new ways of defining poetical genre (which used to be a function of the occasions at which poetry was performed); he found methods of including the voice of performance and the reception of the audience into the text itself; his poetry developed rhetorical strategies to produce a shared experience for his readership.[3]

This contribution will study one particular aspect of the *Aetia*, its depiction of the Muses. I will argue that we can read this image of the Muses as a consequence of the composition of the poem as a written text, as a strategy for communicating with readers for whom poetry in the form of a book-roll was still a fairly new phenomenon, as a way of connecting to a poetical tradition that was shaped by performances and performers. Before we can study the Muses as a device for contextualizing a written text, however, we will have to spend a few moments to look at the fragmentary transmission of the *Aetia* in order to get a clearer picture of the limits of our understanding of this fascinating text.

The following remarks will be quite brief; they are meant as a simple summary of well-known facts for readers who may not be familiar with Callimachus.[4] Though the *Aetia* was considered Callimachus' most important work, readers from the Italian Renaissance until the nineteenth century had access to a few quotations and allusions only.[5] It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that the discovery of papyri in Egypt transmitted substantial portions of the *Aetia* to the modern world. While recent years have yielded a number of additional smaller fragments, most of the longer passages had been found and published by the middle of the twentieth century, when R. Pfeiffer produced his magisterial edition of the poet's works.[6] We now possess about 10 % of the original text of the *Aetia*, in a more or less legible form:[7] while some of the more substantial fragments offer a continuous text that we can be rea|sonably certain was read by Callimachus' ancient public in about the same form, some parts are badly mutilated.

Among the most important and most helpful of these papyrus fragments are the so-called

1 The scholarly literature on this important cultural change is endless; Yunis [46] provides a good introduction to the discussion; one of the first scholarly contributions that emphasized this historical concurrence was Havelock [22].

2 Gutzwiller [17:61] calls it "the single most imitated passage in Latin poetry."

3 I have provided more in-depth analyses of these innovations in [41], [42].

4 For a fuller account, see Massimilla [31] and Harder [20:1.63–72].

5 On what little was known about Callimachus before the nineteenth century, see Lehnus [28:23–6].

6 Pfeiffer [7].

7 Harder [18:64]: "ca. 600 lines out of ca. 6,000."

"diegeseis," preserved in a papyrus now in Milan.[8] They typically quote the first line of a particular *aition* and then go on to provide a prose summary of the story Callimachus relates in the passage. They allow us not only to gain at least some knowledge of parts of the poem that have not been transmitted at all or are preserved in a badly mutilated form, but they also provide an overview of the structure of the poem since they secure the order in which the single stories occurred. Unfortunately, we only have such diegeseis for books 3 and 4 of the *Aetia*; our knowledge of the structure of the first two books is thus less certain and has to rely on speculation and guesswork.

This is also true for an aspect of the work that is particularly momentous for our investigation. The *Aetia* begins with an extended prologue in which the author persona reacts to criticism of his work by mythical gnomes, the "Telchines"; he rejects their argument that "big" poetry is necessarily superior to shorter works (fr. 1 Pf.).[9] The first aetiological narrative concerned sacrifices to the Charites in Paros (fr. 3). As we will see, these aetia are embedded into a framing narrative, a dialogue between the narrator and the Muses.[10] This frame was introduced in the narration of a dream "Callimachus" had had as a young man, in which he was transported from North Africa to mount Helicon in Boeotia, where he encountered the Muses. We have hardly any direct textual evidence of this central part of the *Aetia* and have to rely on a number of external witnesses, the most important of which are scholia in a Florentine papyrus[11] and later references to and imitations of this passage, especially an anonymous epigram in the *Anthologia Palatina* (7.42). Moreover, for reasons that we do not fully understand, Callimachus abandoned this narrative frame after the first two books of the *Aetia*: the aetia in books 3 and 4 of the poem are no longer | related by the Muses. Many scholars have accepted the explanation that books 1–2 of the *Aetia* were published as a complete poem, structured by this dialogue; later in his life, Callimachus added further aetia in two additional books. For this "second edition," he must also have made at least some minor modifications to the books already published.[12] While this is an attractive hypothesis, we should remain aware that it is not more than speculation.

To this extent, we cannot be certain about the structural function of the Muses in the *Aetia*. The state of preservation of the text allows us mere glimpses of their appearances within the narrative framework, but we do not see the compositional function these appearances may have had. Future papyrological finds may yield more details, but unless some improbable stroke of luck gives us a full manuscript of the *Aetia*, we will have to make do with these decontextualized fragments. While the structural function of the Muses in the *Aetia* is thus impossible to elucidate, we are able to understand their poetological role. Their function as mediators between written and oral poetry is obvious right in the prologue, when the narrator mentions Apollo's famous epiphany that told him to prefer "slender" poetry (*Aet.* fr. 1.21–24):

> καὶ γὰρ ὅτ˼ε πρῴ̣τιστον ἐμοῖς ἐπὶ δέλτον ἔθηκα
> γούνασι˼ν, Ἀπ̣[ό]λλων εἶπεν ὅ μοι Λύκιος·
> "…….]…ἀοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον
> θρέψαι, τὴ]ν̣ Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην·"
> For when I put a writing-tablet on my knees for the first time Apollo Lycius said to me: "…

8 See Falivene [13].

9 Text and translation of the *Aetia* will be quoted after Harder [20], who follows Pfeiffer's [7] numbering of the fragments wherever possible. I will cite Harder's numbering only when it diverges from Pfeiffer's.

10 Massimilla (2011) 39–57 provides a convenient overview of the structure of the *Aetia*.

11 Fr. 2d Ha. = schol. Flor. 15–20 Pf.: ὡς κ]ατ' ὄναρ σ(υμ)μείξας ταῖς Μούσ[αις ἐν Ἑ- | λι]κ̣ῶνι εἰλήφοι π(αρ' α)ὐτῶν τ(ὴν) τ(ῶν) αἰτίων [ἐξηγη- | σιν ἀ]ρ̣τ̣ιγένειο̣ς̣ ὢ̣ν̣ […].

12 The theory of a "second edition" had been proposed by Pfeiffer [37]; Parsons [36] esp. 49–50, accepted it and made some modifications to accommodate more recent papyrological discoveries. For a fuller account, see Massimilla [30:1.34–40]; Harder [20:1.2–8].

poet, feed the sacrificial animal so that it becomes as fat as possible, but, my dear fellow, keep the Muse slender."

Unlike most Greek poets of the archaic and classical period, the author of the *Aetia* describes himself as a writer who holds a "tablet" (δέλτος) in his lap.[13] This depiction is continued in Apollo's request to "keep the Muse slender." Terms such as λεπτός had already been used before Callimachus to praise poetry,[14] | but the sophisticated play on the ambivalence of the word appears to be an innovation of this passage. The entire prologue wavers between a physical and a metaphorical sense of words such as "big" and "small" or "loud" and "soft," so a similar reading suggests itself in l. 24: Callimachus' "Muse" is λεπταλέη both because the book that he will publish is to be a small scroll,[15] not a huge work "in many thousands of lines" (l. 4), and because his poetry will follow the principle of "slenderness" (λεπτότης), of being sophisticated and well-wrought rather than overwhelming and expansive.[16]

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Literal modes of poetic production and consumption are thus emphasized in these first lines. At the same time, however, the word "Muse" reminds readers of older models of poetical production. It is no coincidence that Callimachus has Apollo address him as "singer" (ἀοιδέ) in 1.23: since the Homeric epics, the Muse had been the source of knowledge and inspiration for the oral poet's performance in Greek culture,[17] and right after this prologue, the *Aetia* will refer to what was the most famous scene of poetical inspiration in archaic Greek poetry, Hesiod's *Dichterweihe* in the proem of the *Theogony*.[18] These lines, then, are a good example of what I wish to examine in this paper: the "Muses" here can be described as bridging the divide between oral and literate modes of poetical production and as preparing the audience for the relatively new phenomenon of reading a book of poetry. The "slender Muse" points to the reality of the book-roll as well as to the tradition of performance that defined poetry in Greek culture.

The most conspicuous function of the Muses in the *Aetia* (or at least, in the first two books of the *Aetia*) is the extended dialogue in which they are engaged with the first-person narrator. Typically, the narrator will ask the Muses about surprising or striking features of ritual and myth; one of them will react to these questions by delivering a lengthy explanation of these remarkable phenomena. | As an example, we can look at what was the second aetiological narrative in the poem. The narrator wonders why people on the islands of Anaphe and of Lindos use foul language in their prayers to Apollo and Heracles (fr. 7.19–26 Pf. = 7c.1–8 Ha.):

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κῶς δέ, θεαί, ..[...] μὲν ἀνὴρ Ἀναφαῖος ἐπ' αἰσ[χροῖς
   ἡ δ' ἐπὶ δυ[σφήμοις] Λίνδος ἄγει θυσίην,
[...]
         [...] ἤρχετο Καλλιόπη·
"Αἰγλήτην Ἀναφήν τε, Λακωνίδι γείτονα Θήρῃ,
   πρῶτον ἐνὶ μνήμῃ κάτθεο καὶ Μινύας,
ἄρχμενος ὡς ἥρωες ἀπ' Αἰήταο Κυταίου
   αὖτις ἐς ἀρχαίην ἔπλεον Αἱμονίην

13 On some possible implications of this word, see Bruss [5:56–7].
14 See Harder [20:2.62–3] on 1.24.
15 For another reference to the *Aetia* as a physical book, see fr. 7.13–4 with Bing [4:18] and Harder's commentary [20].
16 I am still convinced, as I have tried to show in [41], that this emphasis on "slenderness" and brevity should be seen as a rhetorical strategy advertising the *Aetia* itself rather than a full-blown poetological theory.
17 A useful summary of the role of the Muses in archaic poetry (with references to older scholarly accounts) can be found in Graziosi/Haubold [15:97–9].
18 Unfortunately, the reference to Hesiod occurs in a part of the *Aetia* that is badly mutilated; see above, n. 11; recent discussions with further bibliography can be found in Tulli [43]; Fantuzzi/Hunter [14:51–60].

> "And why, goddesses, does a man at Anaphe sacrifice with insults and Lindus with shameful words […]?" Calliope began: "First commit to your memory Aegletes and Anaphe, the neighbor of Laconian Thera, and the Minyans, beginning how the heroes sailed from Cytaean Aeetes back to ancient Haemonia."

Most of Callimachus' contemporary readers were familiar with the function of the Muses in oral forms of poetry;[19] hence, they recognized numerous aspects of their depiction in this passage: in the epic tradition, the narrator often asks the Muses to tell about particular details, to provide knowledge about events and characters.[20] In the Homeric epic, the Muses "are goddesses and know everything, while we hear only rumors and do not know anything,"[21] and the narrative of the *Iliad* begins with a dialogue of question and answer: "Which of the gods brought these two together to quarrel? The son of Leto and Zeus."[22] Callimachus' dialogue can thus be understood as a vivid enactment of the traditional relationship between epic singer and Muse.

While Callimachus' readers saw these connections to an unspecific epic tradition, they also recognized one epic predecessor as being particularly relevant for the passage: in the prologue of Hesiod's *Theogony*, the narrator starts his account of the generations of gods by asking the Muses a question: "These things tell me from the beginning, Muses who dwell in Olympus, and say what was the | first to come to be. Truly, Chaos was the first to come to be."[23] The importance of this Hesiodic intertext is emphasized by the fact that Callimachus added a further reference to the prologue of the *Theogony* at the end of the *Aetia*, thus framing his entire poem by pointing to its model in Hesiod. The fragment is not well preserved, but the reference to Hesiod is clear enough (fr. 112.5–6):[24]

> κ̣ε̣ίν.. τῷ Μουσαι πολλὰ νέμοντι βοτά
> σὺν̣ μύθους ἐβάλοντο παρ' ἴχν[ι]ον ὀξέος ἵππου·
> ... to whom the Muses, when he was herding many animals, contributed stories near the footprint of the swift horse.

There can be no doubt that the herdsman who grazed his cattle near the spring Hippocrene, which was produced by the hoof of Pegasus, is none other than Hesiod; the words πολλὰ νέμοντι βοτά | […] παρ' ἴχν[ι]ον ὀξέος ἵππου prominently call to mind the earlier description of Hesiod ποιμένι μῆλα νέμοντι παρ' ἴχνιον ὀξέος ἵππου (fr. 2,1 "the shepherd, who was tending his flocks near the footprint of the quick horse"). Callimachus' Muses, then, are the Muses of the epic tradition, but in particular, they are the Muses of Hesiod's *Theogony*; after all, as the *Florentine scholia* tell us, the entire conversation with the Muses took place on mount Helicon in Boeotia, which is clearly connected with Hesiod. I want to draw attention to two further elements of Callimachus' Muses that refer his readers to Hesiod's depiction.

1. While the Homeric epics address the Muse in the singular or unnamed "Muses" in the plural, the individual names of the nine Muses occur for the first time in Hesiod's *Theogony* (77–9),

19 See above, n. 17.

20 See Harder [19:3–8] for examples.

21 *Il.* 2.485–6: ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε πάρεστέ τε ἴστέ τε πάντα, | ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν.

22 *Il.* 1.8–9 Τίς τάρ σφωε θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι; | Λητοῦς καὶ Διὸς υἱός.

23 Hes. *Th.* 114–116: ταῦτά μοι ἔσπετε Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι | ἐξ ἀρχῆς, καὶ εἴπαθ', ὅτι πρῶτον γένετ' αὐτῶν. | ἤτοι μὲν πρώτιστα Χάος γένετ'. On the complexity of this introduction and the blending of narrative voices, see the excellent analysis in de Jong [10:101–3]; on the intertextual relation between Hesiod and the *Aetia*, see Morrison [33:333–7]; on Callimachus and Hesiod see Reinsch-Werner [39].

24 Again, there is an immense debate about this epilogue: was it composed for the "second edition" of the when books 3 and 4 were added to the original poem? Had it originally been placed at the end of book 2, thus framing the dialogue with the Muses? The commentaries of Massimilla [30:2.510–12] and Harder [20:2.855–7] provide summaries of the discussion.

and West [45:180] is probably right to conclude that Hesiod was the inventor of these names. Cohon [9] points out that in Hellenistic art, the names are often given in the exact order | that Hesiod provides in the *Theogony*, which is evidence that his depiction of the Muses had become canonical. When Callimachus uses these Hesiodic names (he refers to Clio in fr. 43.56, to Erato in fr. 137a.8 Ha., and to Calliope in fr. 7.22 Pf. = 7c.4 Ha. and 75.77),[25] he thus draws attention to the Hesiodic pedigree of his Muses.

2. The Callimachean author figure emphasizes that the Muses are his tutelary deities; they provide more than mere inspiration for his poetry, they protect his entire life (fr. 1.37–38):[26]

   ....Μοῦσαι γ⌋ὰρ ὅσους ἴδον ὄθμα⌊τ⌋ι παῖδας
      μὴ λοξῷ, πολιοὺς⌋ οὐκ ἀπέθεντο φίλους.
   … for whomever the Muses did not look at askance as a child they will not reject as a friend when he is old.

While it is true that the Homeric epics depict singers as "beloved by the Muse,"[27] it is again in Hesiod's *Theogony* that this motive is most fully developed: it occurs twice in the prologue (81–4, 96–7), and it is in Hesiod that we find the "look" of the Muses that signifies their divine blessing (82 γεινόμενόν τε ἴδωσι ~ Call. fr. 1.37 ὅσους ἴδον ὄθμα⌊τ⌋ι παῖδας). Moreover, like Hesiod, Callimachus calls his own authorial persona "blessed by the Muses," not a character in his poem such as the singer Demodocus.

What we have seen so far are clear indicators that the Muses in the *Aetia* provide a generic context for the poem: they connect it with the epic tradition, more specifically with Hesiod's *Theogony*, thus making the *Aetia* recognizable as part of a long series of poetic texts. However, the Muses also display a number of untraditional and decidedly un-Hesiodic characteristics, thus emphasizing the novelty of Callimachus' poem. Perhaps the most visible of these features is the way the Muses as characters are depicted: while they know even | recondite details about obscure rituals and help elucidate complex problems, they are fairly relaxed interlocutors, charming and sweet rather than numinous and awe-inspiring, as the introduction to an aition from the second book, about the Sicilian city of Zancle, demonstrates (fr. 43.50–57).

“οἶδα Λεοντίνους [.]δεδρα[.........].....[
   καὶ Μεγαρεῖς ἕτερ[οι] τ̣ο̣ὺ̣ς̣ ἀ[πέ]ν̣ασσαν̣ ἐκεῖ
Νισαῖοι Μεγαρῆες, ἔχω δ’ Εὔβοιαν ἐνισπε[ῖν
   φίλατο κα[ὶ] κεστ[ο]ῦ [δ]εσπότι̣ς ἣν Ἔρυκα·
τάων οὐδεμιῇ γὰ[ρ ὅτ]ις πο̣[τὲ] τεῖχος ἔδειμε
   νωνυμνὶ νομίμην̣ ἔρχ[ε]τ’ ἐπ’ εἰλαπίν̣η̣ν̣.”
ὣς ἐφάμην· Κλειὼ δὲ τ̣ὸ̣ [δ]εύτ̣ερ̣ον ἤρχ[ετο μ]ύθ̣[ου
   χεῖρ’ ἐπ’ ἀδελφειῆς ὦμον̣ ἐρεισαμένη·
“I know of Leontini … and of the Megarians, whom the other Megarians, from Nisa, sent away as colonists, and I can tell about Euboea and about Eryx, which the mistress of the strap loved; for in none of these towns the man who once built its wall comes to the usual sacrificial meal anonymously.” Thus I spoke, and Clio began to speak for the second time, resting her hand upon her sister's shoulder:

25 As the *Florentine scholia* 10 Pf. = fr. 7a.10 Ha. show, Clio was also the speaker in another aition, but we have this testimony only, no fragment mentioning her name. Supplementing the letter πολυμ̣ in fr. 126.3 to a form of the name Polymnia is rightly rejected by Harder [20:2.918] as too uncertain.

26 It should be mentioned that these lines are repeated almost verbatim in *Epigr.* 21.5–6; scholars do not agree if they are authentic in both places or, if only in one, in which one they should be accepted.

27 *Od.* 8.62–63 (about Demodocus, the Phaeacian singer): ἐρίηρον ἀοιδόν, | τὸν περὶ Μοῦσ’ ἐφίλησε.

The gesture described here (“resting her hand upon her sister’s shoulder”) can be found in a number of archeological documents from the ancient world; it is often interpreted as a sign of an intimate connection between the characters thus depicted.[28] In our passage, it presents the Muses as a vivid group of sisters (ἀδελφειῆς, 57) in a casual and relaxed attitude. This informal depiction may remind some readers of the Muses in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, who begin their speech with playful words of abuse against the shepherds who are “all belly” (26). However, in Hesiod’s text, despite this playfulness, the Muses remain powerful and intimidating goddesses. Another encounter with the Muses that may come to mind is the Archilochus legend in the Parian *Monumentum Archilochium*, in which young Archilochus addresses the Muses with mocking words (E 1 col. 2,30 σκώπτειν) and they reply “with jest and laughter” (E 1 col. 2,31 μετὰ παιδιᾶς καὶ γέλωτος);[29] however, it is difficult to gauge in which | period this legendary narrative was produced and to what extent it was known to later writers. As is often the case, Callimachus appears to adopt what was an isolated trait in his predecessors’ depictions of the Muses and develops it into his very own vision: the banter and joviality of the Muses, which was merely alluded to in Hesiod’s text, becomes their main characteristic in Callimachus’ dialogue. Hence, the relationship between his authorial persona and the Muses is unique and provides a novel depiction of poetical production.

This becomes even clearer when we look at the way in which the narrator addresses the Muses in fr. 43: in a long introduction, he first provides a list of all the Sicilian cities whose rituals he has studied: Syracuse, Catane, Selinus, Naxus, Thapsus, Camarina, Gela, Minoa, Leontini, Megara, Euboea, and Eryx. Not until he has given this long catalog does he ask his question: Why is the ritual in Zancle so different from all the other towns? Harder [20:2.314] is certainly right to point out that the passage presents a clever inversion of conventions: usually, it is the Muses’ function to provide such catalogs.[30] But we also see that the author persona’s situation vis-à-vis the Muses is different from the Homeric narrator’s: he is not someone who “hears only rumors and does not know anything,”[31] he is learned and needs only precise supplementary information.[32]

This interpretation of the relationship between the Callimachean persona and the Muses is supported by the narrator’s reaction after Clio’s explanation of the ritual in Zancle (fr. 43.84–7 Pf. = 43b.1–4 Ha.):

> ὣ[ς] ἡ μὲν λίπε μῦθον, ἐγὼ δ’ ἐπὶ καὶ τ̣[ὸ πυ]θέσθαι
> ἤ]θελον – ἦ γάρ μοι θάμβος ὑπετρέφ̣[ε]τ̣ο̣ – ,
> Κ]ισσούσης παρ’ ὕδωρ Θεοδαίσια Κρῆ̣[σσαν ἑ]ο̣ρ̣τὴν
> ἡ] π̣όλις ἡ Κάδμου κῶς Ἁλίαρτος ἄγ̣[ει |
>
> Thus she ended her story, but I wanted to know this as well – for, truly, my amazement was fed while she spoke – why near the water of Cissusa the town of Cadmus, Haliartus, celebrates the Theodaesia, a Cretan festival […].

The narrator’s reaction to Clio’s narrative is “amazement” (θάμβος), which encourages him to ask a further question immediately. What the Muses tell will satisfy the narrator’s (and the audience’s)

28 See Massimilla [30:1.341–2] and Harder [20:2.335–6] for examples and possible implications of this gesture.

29 On the inscriptions relating this legend and the complex layers of narratives, see Müller [35]; Clay [8].

30 Cf. Fantuzzi/Hunter [14:58].

31 Above, n. 21.

32 Cf. Hutchinson [24:44]: “Callimachus appears as an erudite scholar seeking from superior authority the solution of some recondite problems about anomalies and curiosities”; Harder [20:2.302]: “[…] Callimachus did not present himself as a passive listener, but rather as a well-informed young scholar, who in fact offers the Muses the kind of catalogue information for which the narrator of the *Iliad* applied emphatically for their help […].” Morrison [33:337–40] is right to remind us that similar depictions of the Muses’ knowledge occur in earlier poets; he refers to Solon, Simonides, and Pindar.

curiosity and will make him and us wish to hear more similar stories; they provide fascinating anecdotes and interesting facts, but do not reveal divine mysteries about the nature of the world.[33]

Two further ways in which the Muses (or single, named Muses) occur in Callimachus' *Aetia* merit brief consideration. As we have already seen,[34] the word "Muse" can denote the physical scroll of the *Aetia* or the poem itself. This is especially striking in a fragment of the well-known story of Acontius and Cydippe, in book 3. At the end of the vivid narrative, Callimachus names the Cean historian Xenomedes as his source (fr. 75.74–7; the vocative "Cean" in l. 74 is an apostrophe to Acontius, the hero of the story):

> εἶπε δ̣έ̣, Κ̣ε̣ῖ̣ε̣,
> ξυγκραθέντ' αὐταῖς ὀξὺν ἔρωτα σέθεν
> πρέσβυς ἐτητυμίῃ μεμελημένος, ἔ̣ν̣θεν̣ ὁ π̣α̣[ι]δ̣ὸς
> μῦθος ἐς ἡμετέρην ἔδραμε Καλλιόπην.
> And he told, Cean, about your difficult love in his history of those towns, the old man, devoted to the truth, from where the boy's story moved quickly to our Calliope.

Here, the name "Calliope" appears to refer to Callimachus' poem, if we take the preposition ἐς "into" seriously.[35] A similar reference is possible in what was probably the epilogue of the *Aetia* as a whole, fr. 112; in this short fragment of nine lines, the name "Muse" occurs no less than three times. In l. 1, the words | ἐμὴ μοῦσα could again mean "my poem" (or "my poetry"); however, the text is too lacunose to warrant certainty. At the end of this epilogue, Callimachus seems to announce the transition to a new genre (possibly his *Iambi*):

> χαῖρε, Ζεῦ, μέγα καὶ σύ, σάω δ' [ὅλο]ν οἶκον ἀνάκτων·
> αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ Μουσέων πεζὸ̣ν̣ [ἔ]πειμι νομόν.
> A well-meant farewell to you too, Zeus, and save the house of my lords; I, however, will go to the foot-pasture of the Muses.

It is obvious that Callimachus is here playing with the conventions of hymnic closures, in which similar prayers are often combined with the announcement to switch to a different subject.[36] The reading and interpretation of the last line are under intense discussion; *if* the reading πεζὸ̣ν̣ is accepted and *if* we understand (with Pfeiffer) "the foot-pasture of the Muses" as an enallage meaning "the pasture of the pedestrian Muses," referring to the *Iambi* (or possibly to prose works), this line seems to indicate that Muses could represent literary genres, thus preparing for the later development that assigned a specific area of literature or science to every Muse.[37]

These, then, are a number of untraditional aspects of the Muses in Callimachus' *Aetia*: they provide recondite information about fascinating questions, but it would appear that they are most useful for someone who has already done some research and comes to them with precise questions

33 I am not convinced by the arguments of Fantuzzi/Hunter [14:59–60] against Hutchinson's [24:44] interpretation of this amazement: I see nothing religious or "philosophical" in this "wonder," only admiration about this recondite (but fairly mundane) knowledge.

34 Above, n. 15.

35 See Kässer [26:109]: "The poet now has forced the Muse to abandon her former position as provider of divine knowledge and turned her into a mediator of human knowledge […]." Harder [20:2.657] suggests that this use of the Muses is an innovation of books 3–4 of the Aetia (and thus of the poem's second edition); given that 90 % of the text is lost (above, n. 7), this must remain mere guesswork.

36 As an example, I quote the end of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*, 579–80: καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαῖρε Διὸς καὶ Μαιάδος υἱέ· | αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' ἀοιδῆς "Farewell, son of Zeus and of Maia; I will remember both you and another song." Cf. Richardson [40:324–5].

37 See Morrison [33:335–6].

in mind. The information they give will motivate further curiosity and lead to further research. They represent poems and poetry, perhaps even poetic genres. Their form (slender or thick) suggests that they resemble book-rolls. At the same time, they connect Callimachus' *Aetia* with the epic tradition and bring an element of oral performance into his written text.

So far, we have paid attention to the depiction of the Muses as an inspiration of poetic production. It is important to notice that the *Aetia* also shows them being pivotal for the reception of poetic texts. As we have seen (above, p. 6), Callimachus emphasizes the special relationship that his authorial persona entertains with the Muses: they favor him throughout his entire life. However, | this close relationship is necessary for readers as well, as becomes clear when we look at the way the Telchines, evil and malicious goblins, are characterized (fr. 1.1–2):

> Πολλάκ⌋ι μοι Τελχῖνες ἐπιτρύζουσιν ἀ⌊οιδῇ,
> νήιδε⌋ς οἳ Μούσης οὐκ ἐγένοντο φίλοι,
> Often the Telchines mutter against me, against my poetry, who, ignorant of the Muse, were not born as her friend.

The Telchines serve as a foil, as anti-readers:[38] they show how one should not read a poem. They are "ignorant" and "not the Muse's friend": being loved by the Muse(s) is necessary not only for the writer, but also for the reader of this new poetry. This is valid for both functions that the Muses fulfill: Callimachus' ideal audience has to be well-read, has to be familiar with poetical texts, and has to be connected with the performance culture of oral poetry.

When we take all these aspects of the Muses into account, it seems promising to pursue an idea that A. D. Morrison [33:342–3] has suggested:[39] the Muses in Callimachus, especially in his *Aetia*, can be seen as representatives of the written books that he was handling in the Library of Alexandria. This Library was part of the Museion, a sanctuary of the Muses.[40] Callimachus, while never actual head of the Library, wrote the famous *Pinakes* that collected, in 120 volumes, all that was known about the texts in the Library and about their authors.[41] He must have been a voracious and indefatigable reader; for him, encountering Greek poetry meant perusing huge numbers of book rolls, and in his perspective, no one could hope to become knowledgeable about poetry unless they were willing to spend many hours in the Museion, among these books, thus becoming a "friend of the Muses." Moreover, Callimachus was especially interested in unusual phenomena; he was the inventor of "paradoxography" and composed a *Collection of Marvels throughout the World by Location*.[42] For him, books indeed contained erudite information that he was curious about, and every piece of information certainly triggered further enquiries | and searches for answers. The Muses in the *Aetia*, then, can be understood as an allegory of reading, and Callimachus was indeed in constant dialogue with these bookish Muses in real life.

Callimachus is certainly not the first reader of Greek literature: reading gradually became a possible way of encountering poetic texts during the fourth century B.C.E.[43] Yet the Alexandrian Library was the most important place for the transformation of an oral poetic tradition into a canon of written books. In hindsight, this transformation may appear unproblematic and inevitable, yet for the readers and writers involved in this change of medium, it must have been revolutionary. Even

38 See Schmitz [41:163–4].
39 See also Männlein-Robert [29:174].
40 For a good summary of the evidence, see Erskine [12].
41 See Krevans [27], esp. 121–4.
42 See Krevans [27:124–6].
43 As is well known, the earliest depiction of a reader of literature is Dionysus in Aristophanes (see esp. l. 52–4). While this may still be considered exceptional, some fifty years later, Aristotle had the nickname "the reader" (ἀναγνωστής: *Vita Marc.* 6).

when they had been prepared in writing (as, for example, Pindar's victory odes were), even when some members of the audience might wish to reread these texts, the prevailing mode of reception well into the fourth century B.C.E. was still oral performance, and poetry remained imbued with the occasionality and topicality that a performance culture conveyed. Written words were reminders of song and dance, not their substitute.

This changed in the Hellenistic period: scattered texts were made into a coherent literary past; a canon of timeless "great books" slowly developed.[44] Texts became divorced from their local and ritual surroundings, and the work of the Alexandrian philologists, their historical, mythological, linguistic, and interpretive commentaries, demonstrates the difficulties that these newly decontextualized books presented. In a penetrating analysis, J. Assmann [3:87–103] has shown that interpretation and variation are the forces that drive this transformation of an oral and ritual culture into a literary tradition. The Alexandrians are perfect examples of this process: they collect, edit, and interpret texts, establish a historical, biographical, generic, and geographical framework of Greek literary history, and position themselves and their own poetic production into this tradition.

It is in this process that Callimachus' Muses provide a context for this new type of literary production. They look both ways: to the literary past, to the epic and lyric predecessors, to the performance culture of improvising bards and | sophisticated lyric predecessors as well as to the new reading culture of a library that encompasses this entire tradition. By contextualizing the written production of the new Alexandrian poets, the Muses integrate their texts into the horizon of expectation of Greek audiences, giving them recognizability and interpretability.

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I want to conclude this paper by pointing to a phenomenon that demonstrates how successful Callimachus was in securing a place for himself in this poetic tradition: the Lille papyrus that gave us large parts of what was the first poem of the third book of the *Aetia* was written in the late third century B.C.E., thus not more than one or two generations after Callimachus' death.[45] This papyrus contained not only the text of Callimachus' poem, but also a commentary on this text.[46] Callimachus' text has entered into the same category as the Homeric epics, classical tragedy, or lyric poetry: it is part of the great "stream" of tradition.[47] The *Aetia* has indeed become contextualized; its text warrants the same attention and care that the great classical texts deserve. As this paper has tried to show, the Muses helped Callimachus' poetry join this great tradition by providing a link between old and new.

44 For an excellent account of the social and political background of this development, see Asper [2].

45 See the thorough study by Parsons [36].

46 For the phenomenon of philological commentaries on "contemporary" texts, see Montanari [32].

47 On this metaphor, see Assmann [3:92] with n. 5.

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First published in: Ute Tischer, Alexandra Forst und Ursula Gärtner (Hrsgg.), *Text, Kontext, Kontextualisierung. Moderne Kontextkonzepte und antike Literatur* (Spudasmata 179), Olms: Hildesheim 2018.