

CICERO AS A HELLENISTIC POET

Cicero's few pronouncements on contemporary poets have tended to serve as a counterpoint to what we think we know about developments in Roman poetry during the 50s and 40s B.C.E., locating him in that precinct of literary Rome that was not favourably disposed to the literary currents of his day. In particular, attention focusses on his well-known references made in 50 B.C.E. to some unidentified poets as οἱ νεωτέροι, who have a taste for spondaic line ends;¹ in 46 B.C.E. to *poetae noui*, who no longer regard suppression of final 's' as stylistic refinement;² and in 45 B.C.E. to *cantores Euphorionis* who don't appreciate Ennian tragedy.³ The casual vagueness of these references suggests that Cicero was not referring to only a few individuals or a fringe movement, but rather to a prevailing trend in literary fashion that would have been readily recognized by contemporaries; and the generally depreciatory tone of his assessment of contemporary poetry is unmistakable. When Cicero wrote these remarks, Catullus (probably) and Calvus (certainly) were dead, but Cinna was alive and, as Hollis notes, Cornelius Gallus, 'whose hero was Euphorion of Chalcis', might have been starting to make his mark.⁴ Cicero, of course, was a poet himself and in the fragments of his early verse many critics have detected tendencies that would seem to have aligned him with the neoteric aesthetic that is rejected in these comments. His views on contemporary poets in the early 40s have therefore at times seemed somewhat paradoxical. As one has put it, 'there is a certain irony in the reflection that Cicero himself had once been, in effect, a New Poet: the very young man who translated Aratus' *Phaenomena*, who composed the *Pontius Glaucus*, the *Alcyones*, was a student of Hellenistic elegance

¹ Att. 7.2.1 (= 125 SB, c. 25 November 50) *Brundisium uenimus VII Kal. Dec. usi tua felicitate nauigandi; ita belle nobis flauit ab Epiro lenissimus Onchesmites* (hunc σπονδείδζοντα si cui uoles τῶν νεωτέρων pro tuo uendito).

² Orat. 161 *quin etiam, quod iam subrusticum uidetur, olim autem politius, eorum uerborum, quorum eadem erant postremae duae litterae, quae sunt in 'optimus', postremam litteram detrahebant, nisi uocalis insequeretur: ita non erat ea offensio in uersibus quam nunc fugiunt poetae noui*.

³ Tusc. 3.45 *O poetam egregium* [sc. Ennium], *quamquam ab his cantoribus Euphorionis contemnitur!* For these passages N.B. Crowther, 'ΟΙ ΝΕΩΤΕΡΟΙ, *poetae noui*, and *cantores Euphorionis*', CQ 20 (1970), 322–7 and R.O.A.M. Lyne, 'The neoteric poets', CQ 28 (1978), 167–87 (= *Collected Papers on Latin Poetry* [Oxford, 2007], 160–84) remain fundamental. Recently J.E.G. Zetzel, 'The influence of Cicero on Ennius', in W. Fitzgerald and E. Gowers (edd.), *Ennius perennis*. PCPhS Supplementary Volume 31 (Cambridge, 2007), 1–16, at 4–5 has argued that Cicero's interest in Tusc. 3.45 is not primarily aesthetic, but none the less concludes that style *is* at issue in Cicero setting up Ennius 'as a convenient opponent to recent trends which Cicero dislikes: the affected and Hellenizing style of modern poetry, and the Epicurean rejection of traditional values'.

⁴ Cf. A.S. Hollis, *Fragments of Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 2007), 2. Cicero's comments must be read within the context of the late fifties and early forties B.C.E. when the works of Varro of Atax, Catullus, Calvus and Gallus, the poets catalogued by Propertius at 2.34.85–92, defined an era. This picture is scarcely altered if we accept the attractive but improbable suggestion that Catullus was still alive and writing in 47, as argued by A.A. Barrett, 'Catullus 52 and the consulship of Vatinius', TAPhA 103 (1972), 22–38.

and concerned to represent it in Latin; and the older man, therefore, an expert if unfriendly critic of such poetry'.⁵ This reflects the now general consensus that as a young man Cicero embraced the poetics that we associate with Catullus and his contemporaries,⁶ the poets whom it is convenient to style 'neoterics'.⁷

The common flaw in these approaches to Cicero's poetic career is a failure to distinguish between the influence of Hellenistic poetry, which had been constant since the earliest attested stages of Latin literature, and the assertion of a poetics associated with Callimachus: the two are not identical. Cicero was always a Hellenistic poet, never a Callimachean. He was affiliated from his youth with the dominant strand of the Hellenistic tradition in Rome, which embraced epic narratives on contemporary events, against which Catullus and the neoterics reacted and in the process adapted Callimachus' aesthetic programme to their own different, distinctly Roman, purposes. Cicero's own later compositions in the field of historical epic are consistent with his youthful production, not a regression from some kind of proto-neoteric stance. He simply did not participate in the reconfiguration of Callimachean poetics that began with Catullus and remained, as he had been in his youth, a poet in the Hellenistic tradition broadly defined. Within that tradition his turn to epic was unremarkable, indeed it was entirely consistent with the start of his poetic career. His epic poetry earned him some serious recognition as a poet in the early 50s B.C.E., enough, it will be argued here, to earn him a response from Catullus in the emerging opposition.

It should occasion little surprise that the surviving fragments of Cicero's early verse exhibit many of the refinements generally associated with Catullus and the neoterics; but it is a far different matter therefore to associate his poetry with their emphasis on the stream of the Hellenistic tradition that privileged Callimachean aesthetics.⁸ And this provides no basis for distorting what we know about Cicero's early poetry to make it conform to a predetermined Callimachean orientation. A great many confident assertions are made about the nature of Cicero's lost early poetry on the basis of very little evidence, and they tend to overstate the case for

⁵ W. Clausen, 'Cicero and the New Poetry', *HSPh* 90 (1986), 159–70 at 161.

⁶ This view of Cicero's early poetry is widespread in discussions of Cicero's career (e.g. E. Narducci, *Introduzione a Cicerone*² [Rome, 2005], 207) and in standard histories of Latin literature (e.g. L.P. Wilkinson, 'Cicero and the relationship of oratory to literature', in E.J. Kenney and W. Clausen [edd.], *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature II: Latin Literature* [Cambridge, 1982], 230–67, at 246; G.B. Conte, *Latin Literature: a History*. Tr. J. Solodow. Rev. by D. Fowler and G.W. Most [Baltimore and London, 1994], 200–1). And it recurs in more specialized literary studies, such as S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge, 1998), 82, who attempts to downplay the impact of the neoteric engagement with Callimachus by imagining a time when 'the young Cicero could write a post-Callimachean *Glaucus* and a Latin *Aratea*'.

⁷ Lyne (n. 3 [1978]), 167–8 (= [2007], 60–1) represents these poets as a cohesive group, but even if that is not entirely true, the term may still be used as a convenient shorthand for shared poetics, even if the poets themselves implemented their aesthetic principles in quite diverse ways; cf. E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets*² (Oxford, 2003), 189; Hollis (n. 4 [2007]), 1–2.

⁸ R. Hunter's slim volume, *The Shadow of Callimachus* (Cambridge, 2006) may now be added to the literature on the reception of Callimachus in Rome, together with G.O. Hutchinson, *Hellenistic Poetry* (Oxford, 1988), 277–354, A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* (Princeton, 1995), 454–83, and M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge, 2004), 444–85. W. Wimmel's *mega biblion*, *Kallimachos in Rom* (Wiesbaden, 1960) may still be consulted with profit, but there is still scope for new work in which developments in Rome are not treated as an appendix to Hellenistic poetry.

its Callimacheanism. For example, the *Pontius Glaucus*, mentioned by Plutarch.⁹ No fragments survive, but it is often cited as an example of Cicero's Callimachean predilections,¹⁰ apparently for three reasons: first, a similarly titled poem, *Γλαῦκος*, appears among the list of Callimachus' works in the *Suda* (*Test.* 1 Pf.); second, Quintus Cornificius, to whom Catullus addresses a poem (38), composed a work with this title;¹¹ and third, Ovid retells the story of Glaucus in the *Metamorphoses* (13.904–14.69). But Plutarch also tells us that this poem was written in tetrameters, most likely trochaic. This is an unlikely vehicle for epyllion, but one that might locate this poem within an estimable Latin poetic tradition, from Ennius to Lucilius and Accius, who wrote on miscellaneous topics in this metre. Cicero's early poetry did indeed take shape during a period when the Roman literary scene was characterized by engagement with Hellenistic literature. The lively inventiveness of Laevius, and perhaps Matius and Sueius, in matters metrical and lexical is characteristic of the generation before Catullus, as are the pre-neoteric epigrammatists such as Catullus. This tradition had important antecedents in Hellenistic literature, but was not clearly on the narrow Callimachean track.¹² And with only a title attested, Cicero's *Glaucus* must also remain a blank page.

While it might be possible to fill in this blank page with a neoteric epyllion, there are other possibilities neglected by scholars who prefer to view Cicero as betraying his original poetic instincts later in life. In addition to Callimachus, a number of other Hellenistic poets wrote on the fisherman Glaucus and his transformation: Alexander of Aetolia in his *Halieus* (fr. 1 Powell), Nicander in his *Aetolica* (fr. 2 Gow and Scholfield) and *Europa* (fr. 25 Gow and Scholfield), Euanthes in a *Hymn to Glaucus* (*SH* 409), Hedylus in an unknown work (*SH* 457), Hedyle in a poem called *Scylla* (*SH* 456) in elegiacs and Aeschryon of Samos in choliambics (*SH* 5). Cicero's inspiration for a poem on Glaucus was manifestly Hellenistic, but not self-evidently Callimachean, which may in part account for a new poem on the theme by Catullus' friend Cornificius, perhaps intended to show how such a poem *should* be written. Cicero's work, a short poem (*ποιήματιον*) as Plutarch describes it, in tetrameters, smacks more of Aeschryon.¹³

⁹ Plut. *Cic.* 2.3 καὶ τι καὶ διασφύζεται ποιημάτων ἔτι παιδὸς αὐτοῦ Πόντιος Γλαῦκος ἐν τετραμέτρῳ πεποιημένον.

¹⁰ J. Soubiran, *Cicéron: Aratea, Fragments poétiques* (Paris, 1972), 5–6. This view of Cicero's early poetry is widespread: cf. e.g. Hinds (n. 6), 77 on *Pontius Glaucus* as 'very likely in imitation of Callimachus' poem' and E. Fantham, *Roman Literary Culture: From Cicero to Apuleius* (Baltimore and London, 1996), 32 on the *Alcyones* and *Pontius Glaucus*, which 'both must have been fantasy tales of metamorphosis'. The important word to interrogate in this and similar pronouncements is 'must'. Fantuzzi and Hunter (n. 8), 464 are more circumspect.

¹¹ Cf. Courtney (n. 7), 225–6. As Hollis (n. 4), 152 notes, 'the fisherman Glaucus, who became a sea-god after eating a wonderful herb, attracted a remarkable amount of interest from Hellenistic and Roman poets'.

¹² Cf. A. Traglia, *Marco Tullio Cicerone: I frammenti poetici* (Milan, 1962), 11. The discussion of these and other predecessors of Catullus by D.O. Ross, *Style and Tradition in Catullus* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 137–69 is still of fundamental importance, especially at 155–60 on Laevius. See also A.M. Morelli, *L'epigramma latino prima di Catullo* (Cassino, 2000), esp. 300–37, although his characterization of 'il frusto eclettismo poetico di uomini come Cicerone, che si dedica all'epigramma "meleagreo" e alla poesia "leggera" ma non rifiuta neanche l'epica ennianeggiante' elides the problem that such 'eclecticism' is actually a trait of Hellenistic poetry in all its aspects, Callimachean or not.

¹³ There is no more to be said about the two other titles by Cicero attested for his early years. The *Limon* appears to have been a miscellany of judgements about poets: the four hexameters quoted by Suetonius about Terence begin with the words *tu quoque*, implying a list

Similar reservations may be expressed about the neoteric credentials of another title attributed to Cicero. Nonius cites one hexameter and a fragment of another referring to Ceyx, the husband of Alcyone, from a work called *Alcyones* (Non. 65.8 M = 90 L, fr. 1 Courtney): *praeuius dictus est antecessens. Cicero Alcyon<ibus>: hunc genuit claris delapsus ab astris | praeuius Aurorae, solis noctisque satellites*. Although the passage contains only a genealogical notice that gives away nothing about its contents, on some views we can know a great deal more about this poem. According to Soubiran, in an assessment echoed by subsequent commentators, this was 'without doubt a kind of epyllion, imitated from an Alexandrian work', in which 'Cicero recounted the touching story of the shipwrecked Ceyx and his wife Alcyone, both of whom were changed into birds'.¹⁴ It requires a significant leap of faith to believe in this epyllion, which sounds a bit like Cinna's *Smyrna avant la lettre*. The basis for such a broad inference is only the title of the poem, the fact that Ovid famously recounted this story in Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*, and the possibility that Nicander might have touched on it somewhere in his writings and thus served as Cicero's source. This we learn from ps.-Probus in a note on *Georgics* 1.399: *dilectae Thetidi alcyones: uaria est opinio harum uolucrum originis. itaque in altera sequitur Ouidius Nicandrum, in altera Theodorum*.¹⁵ Nicander's reference to Alcyone is assigned to his *Heteroeumena*, on a reasonable conjecture,¹⁶ but we are still a long way off from constructing a scenario in which Cicero can plausibly be viewed as a Callimachean precursor of Ovid. It requires only a small leap of faith to conceive of Cicero as drawing on Nicander, a contemporary of Aratus with whom he is closely associated in the traditions surrounding both poets.¹⁷ Nicander's works might well have appealed to Cicero, as Aratus' did; but to turn Cicero's *Alcyones* into a epyllion derived from Nicander requires a second, much larger, leap of faith, for it is far from certain that Nicander's *Heteroeumena* was a narrative poem rather than a learned catalogue.¹⁸ Cicero's tastes ran toward the learned and the didactic, and it was Nicander's *Georgica* that elicited his only comment

or catalogue. For what little can be inferred from the testimonia and the title, cf. Soubiran (n. 10), 21–7. Again, it is implausible in the extreme to see a neoteric or Callimachean inspiration in a catalogue poem of this type. About the *Thalia maesta*, a snippet of which is transmitted in a garbled note by Servius (on *Ecl.* 1.57), Soubiran (n. 10), 17 notes, 'le titre, l'étendue et le contenu restent incertains'.

¹⁴ Soubiran (n. 10), 8; cf. Courtney (n. 7), 152.

¹⁵ This note appears to preserve some genuine learning, for Ovid does indeed present two different *aetia* for the halcyon, but it also offers grounds for caution in making inferences about the lost models. If Book 7 of the *Metamorphoses* had been lost, one might be tempted to think that somewhere in his works Ovid recounted the alternative aetiology in the manner of an epyllion, as he does the story of Ceyx and Alcyone in *Met.* 11.410–748, when in fact the other version is only alluded to in a single line (7.401).

¹⁶ Fr. 64 Schneider; cf. A.S.F. Gow and A.F. Scholfield, *Nicander: The Poems and Poetical Fragments* (Cambridge, 1953), 208.

¹⁷ Cf. Cameron (n. 8), 194–207. Cameron's identification of the author of the *Heteroeumena* with the third-century B.C.E. contemporary of Aratus is not accepted by the most recent editor; cf. J.-M. Jacques, *Nicandre: Oeuvres, Tome II* (Paris, 2002), xiii and, pending the appearance of his first volume, his paper 'Nicandre de Colophon poète et médecin', *Ktema* 4 (1979), 133–49. But the synchronism with Aratus, found in the ancient lives of Aratus, was also assumed by Cicero when he associated the two in *De or.* 1.69.

¹⁸ For the little that can be surmised about authorship, dating and character of the *Heteroeumena*, cf. J. Lightfoot, *Parthenius of Nicaea* (Oxford, 1999), 20–2.

on the poet, a favourable one.¹⁹ The present state of our evidence simply allows no conclusion that Cicero's *Alcyones* was a Callimachean epyllion, whatever one takes that to mean, although it remains one possibility. An equally likely inference, both from the lone extant citation and from the title, is that this poem was in the learned catalogue tradition of poets like Nicander. It is, of course, most likely that the title, *Alcyones*, refers to the birds that stemmed from the metamorphosis of the most celebrated Alcyone, known from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but the plural is an unlikely title for a poem about her singular self.²⁰ It is at least equally plausible that the poem dealt in summary form with alternative aetiologies or with the many other women in myth who bore the name of Alcyone, a context with which the genealogical content of the only fragment is consistent.²¹ That Cicero was aware of the many bearers of this name is suggested by the genealogy for Glaucus Pontius, the subject of another of his poems, given by Mnaseas, a student of Eratosthenes, who is the source for the name of Glaucus' mother, Alcyone.²² It is as likely, then, that Cicero's *Alcyones* had much in common with a catalogue poem such as the *Erotes* of Phanocles, and in any case, it is not self-evidently Callimachean (or neoteric) in inspiration.²³

Few inferences about Cicero's neoteric inclinations would have been made were it not for the substantial survival of his *Aratea*. Callimachus' praise of Aratus and his *λεπταὶ ῥήσιες* (*Epigr.* 27.3–4 Pf.) established the credentials of the *Phaenomena* as a poem of which Callimachus approved, and so it would seem that any poet who did likewise must be signing on to the Callimachean aesthetic programme.²⁴ But praise of the *Phaenomena* comes also from quarters not associated with that programme, for example from Leonidas of Tarentum (*Anth. Pal.* 9.25),²⁵ and while Aratus was clearly an important model for Virgil and other Latin poets in the

¹⁹ *De or.* 1.69 si [sc. constat inter doctos] de rebus rusticis hominem ab agro remotissimum Nicandrum Colophonium poetica quadam facultate, non rustica, scripsisse praeclare ...

²⁰ The plural, which must be supplemented in Nonius, is secured by the reference in *SHA* 20.3.2.

²¹ I suggest this with some diffidence as a possible explanation for the plural of the title: although Greek and Latin authors consistently treat the name as first declension, in ps.-Luc. *Halc.* there is some ambiguity in referring to her as Ἀλκυών. Another possibility is that the version in which both Ceyx and Alcyone are transformed, which is found in later sources (Hyg. *Fab.* 65; Probus on Verg. *G.* 1.399, 3.338; *Myth. Vat.* 1.9) drawing on Ovid, is actually older and lies behind Cicero's title; cf. H. Tränkle, 'Elegisches in Ovids *Metamorphosen*', *Hermes* 91 (1963), 467–8, whose despair I share (468, n. 7): 'Welcher Art war das Gedicht?'

²² Ath. 7.296b (= *FHG* 12); cf. P. Cappelletto, *I frammenti di Mnasea. Introduzione, testo e commento* (Milan, 2003), 142–7. This same Alcyone, a daughter of Atlas and one of the Pleiades, is also mentioned by Ovid at *Fast.* 4.173. In addition to her and the wife of Ceyx, six other entries are listed in W.H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (Leipzig, 1884–1923), 1.249–51.

²³ For Hellenistic catalogue poems of this sort, with their 'mechanical linking of successive stories', see Cameron (n. 8), 380–6, G.O. Hutchinson, *Talking Books* (Oxford, 2008), 200–24 on *P. Oxy.* 4711. A substantial fragment of Phanocles' poem survives; cf. J.U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* (Oxford, 1925), 106–9.

²⁴ For a corrective to this extreme position, see Cameron (n. 8), 387–93. Rejection of the conventional interpretation, however, is taken to an unconvincing extreme by K. Tsantsanoglou, 'The λεπτότης of Aratus', *Trends in Classics* 1 (2009), 55–89.

²⁵ Cf. *SH* 712, an epigram attributed to 'Ptolemy', where Aratus is praised as an astronomical poet along with two others. One of them, Hermippus, is probably to be identified with a student of Callimachus (cf. *SH* 485–90 for references); but the other, Hegesianax, can be located at the court of Antiochus III, reciting what was probably epic poetry, *pace* Cameron (n. 8) 279; cf. *SH* 464.

Callimachean vein, his wide fame outside writers' circles was primarily due to the utility of his poem as an introductory text in astronomy.²⁶ As a poetic project, Cicero's adaptation is entirely in keeping with the earlier traditions of Roman poetry in its engagement with Hellenistic literature, and so it is hardly surprising that, as critics have noted, it displays many points of contact with Catullus and the fragments of the neoterics.²⁷ What is missing is any indication that Cicero's interest in Aratus had anything to do with Callimachean aesthetics, since in and of itself a translation of the *Aratea* does not indicate such an intent. Cicero's involvement with Aratus has rightly been judged to be more closely related to his interest in polymathy as a credential for an orator than in its aesthetic qualities as a model for a poetic movement.²⁸ It may very well have been his teacher, Archias,²⁹ who steered him in the direction of this project. An interest in Aratus might be expected in Archias, who came to Rome from Antioch, a city with which Aratus was closely associated and where he may have died.³⁰

Against this background we may reconsider Cicero's relationship with Archias, not only in 62 at the time of his defence, but in the earliest phase of their relationship when the young Cicero was a student of Archias, the client of great aristocratic families.³¹ Some confirmation of Cicero's supposed neoteric leanings has been seen in the very fact of this relationship. Some thirty-seven epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* are attributed to a poet named 'Archias', although variations in the transmitted nomenclature suggest multiple poets by this name.³² Even if one were to accept all as the product of Cicero's tutor and future client, this hardly represents a remarkable output as an epigrammatist. And even if, as also seems likely, he was included in Meleager's *Garland*, so too were many writers who expressed antipathy toward Callimachean aesthetics.³³ It may or may not be important that Cicero nowhere adverts to this aspect of Archias' literary output. Instead he refers to a particular talent tending in the opposite direction from the brief, pointed epigram (*Arch.* 18):

quotiens ego hunc uidi, cum litteram scripsisset nullam, magnum numerum optimorum uersuum de eis ipsis rebus quae tum agerentur dicere ex tempore, quotiens reuocatum eandem rem dicere commutatis uerbis atque sententiis.

²⁶ Cf. D. Kidd, *Aratus: Phaenomena* (Cambridge, 1997), 45.

²⁷ In addition to Clausen (n. 5), see D.P. Kubiak, 'The Orion episode of Cicero's *Aratea*', *CJ* 77 (1981), 12–22 for discussion of stylistic refinement in Cicero's *Aratea*. In its archaizing diction and morphology, including the first declension genitive in *-ai* and elision of final *-s*, as well as its fondness for compound adjectives and alliteration, the *Aratea* displays more continuity with early Latin poetic style than it does with the aesthetics of Catullus' generation.

²⁸ Cf. Courtney (n. 7), 149–50.

²⁹ Cf. T.N. Mitchell, *Cicero: The Ascending Years* (New Haven, 1979), 6.

³⁰ On Aratus' associations with Antioch, cf. E. Pack, 'Antiochia: Schema di uno spazio letterario semivuoto', in G. Cambiano, L. Canfora and D. Lanza (edd.), *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica. Tomo I: La produzione e la circolazione del testo. Tomo II: L'Ellenismo* (Rome, 1993), 717–67 at 727–8, and for the city as his probable place of death, Kidd (n. 26), 5.

³¹ For a recent survey, with copious reference to earlier literature, see L. Spahlinger, 'Cicero als Literaturförderer', *Philologus* 144 (2000), 247–50. Some scepticism about the early relationship between Archias and Cicero may be in order if, as argued by E. Narducci, *Cicerone e l'eloquenza romana: retorica e progetto culturale* (Rome and Bari, 1997), 4 n. 3, the orator is exaggerating in the *Pro Archia* for tactical reasons.

³² See A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip* (Cambridge, 1968), 2.432–5 on the problems of attribution.

³³ Cf. P.E. Knox, 'Wine, water, and Callimachean polemics', *HSPH* 89 (1985), 107–19.

This description of extempore composition has often been taken to refer to epigrams produced in a symposiastic context, but that can hardly be the case. Cicero describes the composition of a long work (*magnum numerum optimorum uersuum*) on contemporary events (*de eis ipsis rebus quae tum agerentur*), which could thus only be premeditated in a very limited sense.³⁴ The subjects of these extemporaneous poems are unknown, but encomiastic narratives of the recent accomplishments of Archias' distinguished patrons could certainly be included in the phrase *de eis ipsis rebus quae tum agerentur*. That would also provide a much stronger basis for Cicero's description of Archias' relations with noble Romans such as Marius. Cicero asks how Rome could now repudiate a great poet who has put his talent in the service of glorifying the Roman state (*Arch.* 19):

praesertim cum omne olim studium atque omne ingenium contulerit Archias ad populi Romani gloriam laudemque celebrandam? nam et Cimbricas res adulescens attigit et ipsi illi C. Mario qui durior ad haec studia uidebatur iucundus fuit.

The context certainly seems to require a more substantial production than a flattering epigram, as is sometimes supposed.³⁵ Cicero then describes Archias' poem on the Mithradatic war, celebrating L. Lucullus, in more detail (*Arch.* 21):

Mithradaticum uero bellum magnum atque difficile et in multa uarietate terra marique uersatum totum ab hoc expressum est; qui libri non modo L. Lucullum, fortissimum et clarissimum uirum, uerum etiam populi Romani nomen inlustrant.

A narrative poem on proconsuls and battles, whether extemporized or meditated, is not part of the dossier of the neoteric Roman poet channelling Callimachus, but it is an important credential for the professional Greek poets of the Hellenistic period who plied their trade in the cities of the Greek and Roman world, finding welcome in the homes of the rich and powerful.³⁶ Archias is securely located in this company, performing as tutor and decorative hanger-on to Rome's elite.³⁷ Cicero may have had strategic reasons for presenting Archias' output in this way to the court,³⁸ but however much Cicero might manipulate the facts about Archias' works, his account is unlikely to be wildly at variance with the perceptions of informed

³⁴ Cf. A. Hardie, *Statius and the Silvae: Poets, Patrons and Epideixis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Liverpool, 1983), 22 and 82–3; M. Citroni, *Poesia e lettori in Roma antica: forme della comunicazione letteraria* (Rome and Bari, 1995), 49–50.

³⁵ By e.g. G. Williams, *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire* (Berkeley, 1978), 115 and T.P. Wiseman, 'Pete nobiles amicos: poets and patrons in late republican Rome', in B.K. Gold (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (Austin, 1982), 28–49, at 31.

³⁶ Cicero may be exaggerating or otherwise distorting the actual character of Archias' work, as suggested by Narducci (n. 31), 13–14, followed by Zetzel (n. 3), 9; but the view presented in the speech of the utility of poetry in a public context is consistent with Cicero's views elsewhere expressed about the uses of Greek culture generally; cf. J.E.G. Zetzel, 'Plato with pillows', in D. Braund and C. Gill (edd.), *Myth, History and Culture in Republican Rome: Studies in Honour of T.P. Wiseman* (Exeter, 2003), 119–38, at 123–9.

³⁷ Cf. Hardie (n. 34), 15–36.

³⁸ For discussion of the tactical considerations that may have influenced Cicero's depiction of Archias, cf. E. Narducci, *Marco Tullio Cicerone: il poeta Archia* (Milan, 1992), 33–66 and D.H. Berry, 'Literature and persuasion in Cicero's *Pro Archia*', in J. Powell and J. Paterson (edd.), *Cicero the Advocate* (Oxford, 2004), 291–311.

contemporaries. It is impossible to imagine Cicero pursuing this line of defence if Archias' poetry was cut from the cloth of Callimachus or Parthenius.

Even if there was no extensive tradition of historical epic in the third-century Hellenistic world, as Cameron has argued,³⁹ by the first century B.C.E. it was being practised at Rome, both by Greeks and Romans. Archias may have been the first in Rome, but others followed. In Greek we later hear of Boethus of Tarsus, who wrote a poem of some sort (Strabo refers to it as *ἔπος*⁴⁰) on Antony's victory at Philippi (*SH* 230, 1131B). And there were numerous practitioners of this type of poem writing in Latin.⁴¹ In addition to the *Annales* of Volusius, which would have been forgotten but for Catullus (36, 95.7–8), there were poems by Hostius on C. Sempronius Tuditanus' victory of 129,⁴² Furius of Antium on Catulus' victory over the Cimbri of 101,⁴³ Furius Bibaculus' *Annales Belli Gallici*,⁴⁴ and Varro of Atax's *Bellum Sequanicum*,⁴⁵ the last two both celebrating Caesar's Gallic campaigns.⁴⁶ It was in this stream of the Hellenistic tradition that Cicero's tastes evolved, and under these terms that he himself might be classed as a Hellenistic poet.⁴⁷ Like Archias, his tutor, Cicero dabbled in minor forms of verse to show off his learning; and also like Archias he was to turn his hand to writing of the achievements of great Romans. In his youth, perhaps, he had already written of his distant relation, Marius.⁴⁸ What was unique about his later epic was, of course, his choice of honorand, himself. To modern tastes this may seem absurd, merely another manifestation of the man's notorious self-promotion, but to Roman sensibilities,

³⁹ Cameron (n. 8), 263–302. Cameron's demolition of the genre of Hellenistic historical epic reconstructed by K. Ziegler in *Das hellenistische Epos. Ein vergessenes Kapitel griechischer Dichtung* (Leipzig, 1966) is among the more controversial points in his book. As argued by A. Kerkhecker, 'Zur internen Gattungsgeschichte der römischen Epik: das Beispiel Ennius', in *L'histoire littéraire immanente dans la poésie latine*, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 47 (Vandoeuvres–Genève, 2001), 58–60, Cameron's insistence on generic distinctions among encomium, regional epic, *ktisis* poetry and something we would call 'historical epic' is overly rigid; cf. also the review of Cameron by P.E. Knox in *EMC* 15 (1996), 413–24.

⁴⁰ Strab. 14.5.14. Cameron (n. 8), 285 rejects the idea that this implies epic rather than panegyric, but the generic distinction between the two types is probably not significant in poems of this sort.

⁴¹ On the epic poets intervening between Ennius and Cicero, see S. Goldberg, *Epic in Republican Rome* (Cambridge, 1995), 135–6.

⁴² Courtney (n. 7), 52–5; cf. W. Suerbaum (ed.), *Die archaische Literatur von den Anfängen bis Sullas Tod* (Munich, 2002), 281–2.

⁴³ Courtney (n. 7), 97–8; cf. Suerbaum (n. 42), 282–3.

⁴⁴ Courtney (n. 7), 195–200; Hollis (n. 4), 128–35.

⁴⁵ Courtney (n. 7), 238; Hollis (n. 4), 179–80.

⁴⁶ Cf. Cameron (n. 8), 288, referring to P. White, *Promised Verse* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 79, who counts two dozen epic poets from the late Republic and early Empire. See now the Appendix in Hollis (n. 4), 420–30.

⁴⁷ Cf. M. Hose, 'Cicero als hellenistischer Epiker', *Hermes* 123 (1995), 455–69 on locating Cicero's *De consulatu suo* in the tradition of Hellenistic epic.

⁴⁸ The current consensus is in favour of a date of composition in the 50s, but the evidence is entirely circumstantial. The only terminus is Cicero's reference to the poem in the prologue of the *De legibus*. In support of that dating, Courtney (n. 7), 178 notes that, in the period following Cicero's return from exile, 'the meaning of Marius was greatly enhanced for him and allusions in the speeches multiply'. While that might supply a reason for Cicero to allude to this poem, which dealt with Marius' exile and return, it does not supply a sufficient motive for dating the composition to this period. Equally compelling arguments have been made for attributing the poem to Cicero's youth, for which see the summary discussion by Soubiran (n. 10), 44–5, with references to earlier literature.

more attuned to self-aggrandizing pamphlets, memoirs and *commentarii*, it may not have seemed so, at least not at first.

At some point in his lifetime Cicero acquired a reputation as Rome's leading poet; so it is reported by Plutarch (*Cic.* 2.3–4), and there is little reason to doubt that this assertion has some basis in fact, since it is not an inference that anyone would have been likely to make based on later views of his poetry:

ἐρρύνη πως προθυμότερον ἐπὶ ποιητικὴν, καί τι καὶ διασφύζεται ποιημάτων ἔτι παιδὸς αὐτοῦ Πόντιος Γλαῦκος, ἐν τετραμέτρῳ πεποιημένον. προῦν δὲ τῷ χρόνῳ καὶ ποικιλώτερον ἀπτόμενος τῆς περὶ ταῦτα μούσης, ἔδοξεν οὐ μόνον ῥήτωρ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιητὴς ἄριστος εἶναι Ῥωμαίων. ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τῇ ῥητορικῇ δόξα μέχρι νῦν διαμένει, καίπερ οὐ μικρὰς γεγεννημένης περὶ τοὺς λόγους καινοτομίας, τὴν δὲ ποιητικὴν αὐτοῦ, πολλῶν εὐφυῶν ἐπιγενομένων, παντάπασιν ἀκλεῆ καὶ ἄτιμον ἔρρειν συμβέβηκεν.

This reputation did not outlast Cicero's lifetime; indeed, it probably did not last all his lifetime, but the questions at what point in his career was he thought of in this way and what works provoked this lofty assessment are surely relevant to Cicero's views on Catullus and the neoterics in the 40s. Among modern scholars it is generally assumed that it is his early works, chiefly his *Aratea*, that established Cicero's reputation as a poet, but Plutarch's report seems to rule out his juvenile works: he acquired this reputation later in his life (*προῦν δὲ τῷ χρόνῳ*). And on this interpretation it would appear that Cicero achieved this reputation as leading poet at a time when he was also regarded as the leading orator (*ἔδοξεν οὐ μόνον ῥήτωρ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιητὴς ἄριστος εἶναι*). That rather narrows the window for such a moment, and seems to rule out a reputation based strictly, or even primarily, on the *Aratea* and other poems of his youth.⁴⁹ In fact, the unlikely candidate, from our point of view, for having secured, however briefly, Cicero's reputation as Rome's leading poet would seem to be the *De consulatu suo*.

The *De consulatu suo* and the *Pro Archia* are joined in a tight nexus. The speech was delivered in 62 at a time when tensions over Cicero's handling of the Catilinarian conspiracy were dramatically on the rise.⁵⁰ In the course of the speech, Cicero announces that he has approached Archias about documenting his own accomplishments in a poem (*Arch.* 28):

quas res nos in consulatu nostro uobiscum simul pro salute huius urbis atque imperii et pro uita ciuium proque universa re publica gessimus, attigit hic uersibus atque inchoauit; quibus auditis, quod mihi magna res et iucunda uisa est, hunc ad perficiendum adornaui.

⁴⁹ The chronological implications of Plutarch's report are noted by W.R. Johnson, 'Neoteric poetics', in M. Skinner (ed.), *A Companion to Catullus* (Oxford, 2007), 175–89 at 179, who does not, however, make the inevitable connection with the *De consulatu suo*. This did not entirely escape Goldberg (n. 37), 151 but it was not part of his brief to assess the consequences for Cicero's relationship with the neoterics.

⁵⁰ Excellent synthesis of the evidence and narrative of events can be found in T.N. Mitchell, *Cicero: The Senior Statesman* (New Haven, 1991), 63–97. 62 is the date generally accepted for Cicero's defence of Archias, largely on the basis of the identification of the presiding magistrate as Cicero's brother in *Schol. Bob.* Although their reliability is not high, there is no basis for rejecting this identification and assigning the speech to a later date, as does J. Bellemore, 'The date of the *Pro Archia*', *Antichthon* 36 (2002) 41–53. Cicero's public remarks in this speech about Archias embarking on a poem about his consulship (28 *attigit hic uersibus atque inchoauit*) hardly conflict with his private complaints about Archias' failure to deliver.

In the context of Pompey's notorious snub of Cicero after his return from the East and attendant difficulties with Pompey's agents in Rome,⁵¹ Cicero was thinking of his reputation, and the views expressed in this speech on the uses of epic reflect his already evolving concern for his legacy (*Arch.* 14):

imagines non solum ad intuendum uerum etiam ad imitandum fortissimorum uirorum expressas scriptores et Graeci et Latini reliquerunt.

The sequel is well known. Archias of course did not deliver the hoped-for epic and Cicero was not a patient man in such matters. A letter to Atticus from the summer of 61 reports no progress on that front: *Att.* 1.16.15 (= 16 SB) *praesertim cum ... Archias nihil de me scripserit*. And in December of 60 he writes again to Atticus, declaring himself optimistic that he will have 'intimate association with Pompey, with Caesar too if I want it, reconciliation with my enemies, peace with the populace, tranquillity in my old age' (*Att.* 2.3.4 = 23 SB) and quoting three verses from the third and apparently final book of his *De consulatu suo*. Our view of this poem is perhaps irretrievably coloured by its later reception, and in particular the fun that can be had with the notorious line, *o fortunatam natam me consule Romam*, 'much criticized for its vanity and its assonance'.⁵² Those criticisms make sense in the aftermath of Cicero's political demise and the advent of a new poetic style that eschewed the sound effects of early Roman verse. But in 60–59 B.C.E., a three-book poem from the hand of Rome's leading orator may well have been enough to earn him a reputation as a leading poet, especially in the same literary circles that appreciated the likes of Archias.⁵³ Cicero's talents at versification apparently closely tracked his, for, as Plutarch also reports, Cicero too had a knack for cranking it out at the rate of 500 lines per night.⁵⁴

Since the reading public did not yet know Lucretius' *De rerum natura* in 59,⁵⁵ and had not seen much, if anything, of the Catullan *libellus*, Cicero's *De consulatu*

⁵¹ For Cicero's rather different expectations of Pompey at the time, cf. *Fam.* 5.7 (= 3 SB) and D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero: Epistulae ad Familiares* (Cambridge, 1977), Vol. 1, 279–81.

⁵² Courtney (n. 7), 159. Sport could also be had with Cicero's representation of himself participating in a council of the gods, an episode that should be located in *De consulatu suo*; cf. S.J. Harrison, 'Cicero's "De Temporibus Suis": the evidence reconsidered', *Hermes* 118 (1990), 458–62. It was mocked in the pseudo-Sallustian *Invectiva in Ciceronem*, but later parodies may not accurately reflect the contemporary reception of the *De consulatu suo*, and there is useful discussion of the likelihood that the poem's original reception was not hostile by W. Allen, 'O fortunatam natam ...', *TAPhA* 87 (1956), 130–46; see now S. Goldberg, *Constructing Literature in the Roman Republic: Poetry and its Reception* (Cambridge, 2005), 184–6.

⁵³ For a recent discussion of the poem's qualities, cf. Goldberg (n. 41), 148–57. It might be possible to relate the appearance of the Muse Urania in the long fragment quoted by Cicero himself at *Div.* 1.17 (cf. Soubiran [n. 10], 240–3; Courtney [n. 7], 160–71) to the dream sequence in the *Aetia*, but that does not suffice to set the poem in a neoteric context. Catullus' views of Callimachus as a model are quite remote from Cicero's mechanical use of this device, as noted by Hutchinson (n. 8), 278: 'poets could certainly use some of the devices employed by Callimachus in his prologue without thereby professing allegiance to his supposed theories.'

⁵⁴ Plut. *Cic.* 40.3 τῇ δὲ πρὸς τὴν πόλιν εὐκολία παίζων ἐχρήτο· λέγεται γάρ, ὁπνῖκα βυεῖη πρὸς τὸ τοιοῦτον, τῆς νυκτὸς ἑπὶ ποιεῖν πεντακόσια. This passage is acutely adduced by Johnson (n. 49), 179 in reference to Catullus' criticisms of Volusius in 95.3 *milia cum interea quingenta* *Hatrianus in uno*, with Munro's emendation accepted. On the text, see Courtney (n. 7), 230–2; J.M. Trappes-Lomax, *Catullus: A Textual Reappraisal* (Swansea, 2007), 269–70.

⁵⁵ And may not have for some few years to come: cf. G.O. Hutchinson, 'The date of *De rerum natura*', *CQ* 51 (2001), 150–62.

suo may well have appeared an impressive achievement to all except his political opponents, who would soon turn it to fodder for abuse.⁵⁶ But to the emerging literary talents who were soon to eclipse him, a narrative poem in three books on a consul and his battles ran counter to the new aesthetics. Nowadays few readers miss 'the obvious and emphatic irony'⁵⁷ of Catullus' seven-line squib directed at Cicero in Poem 49:

Disertissime Romuli nepotum,
quot sunt quotque fuere, Marce Tulli,
quotque post aliis erunt in annis,
gratias tibi maximas Catullus
agit pessimus omnium poeta,
tanto pessimus omnium poeta,
quanto tu optimus omnium patronus.

In all the many attempts to imagine a context for this poem,⁵⁸ it appears to have occurred to no one that this jibe might have been directed at Cicero at a time when some were regarding the best advocate of all as also the best poet, composing in a style and on a theme being rejected by some in the new generation. That Catullus is thanking Cicero for the gift of his great poem, the *De consulatu suo*, might well have occurred to a reader accustomed to Catullus' practice of responding to the appearance of a new work of poetry with a poem in return (e.g. Cat. 35, 95, 96), a practice which contemporaries such as Cinna and Tigidas shared.⁵⁹ And therein lies the point in Catullus' self-depreciating reference to himself as the worst of poets, and the reminder to Cicero that he is indeed the best, the best *patronus*. In such a context, addressed to Cicero at a time when some, surely including Cicero himself, considered him Rome's best poet, that last word would have been a particularly ironic and stinging *aprosdokêton*.

Many have concluded that Cicero's depreciation of contemporary Latin poets was related to his championing of early poets and could be attributed to wounded pride at being displaced as Rome's leading poet.⁶⁰ Thus Shackleton Bailey: 'it was less patriotic pride or literary pleasure than the potent impulse of punctured self-esteem which made him their champion.'⁶¹ This has been viewed as an important impetus to his turn to epic narrative. But the proximate cause for Cicero, who had been a Hellenistic poet in his youth, to return to poetry in his mature years, this time in the genre of epic, was rather his wounded pride in his political achievements. His literary leanings remained rooted in the Hellenistic tradition. In the speech in defence of the by then rather elderly Archias, Cicero doesn't mention the other

⁵⁶ *Pis.* 72 suggests criticism, at least of the poem's content, as early as 55, while Cicero's complaints about attacks on the poem by certain *invidi* and *improbi* at *Off.* 1.77 certainly implies much broader criticisms.

⁵⁷ W.J. Tatum, 'Catullus' criticism of Cicero in Poem 49', *AJPh* 118 (1988), 179–84 at 184.

⁵⁸ For an overview, in addition to Tatum (n. 50), see Spahlinger (n. 27), 253–7.

⁵⁹ Cf. Citroni (n. 30), 65–7. It has occurred to others, e.g. H. Gugel, 'Cicero und Catull', *Latomus* 26 (1967), 686–8, that poetry is in some fashion the likely context for Cat. 49, but they have not identified the circumstances in which such an exchange would have particular point.

⁶⁰ e.g. E. Malcovati, *Cicerone e la poesia* (Pavia, 1943); M.P.O. Morford, 'Ancient and modern in Cicero's poetry', *CPh* 62 (1967), 112–16; N.M. Horsfall, 'Cicero and poetry: the place of prejudice in history', *PLLS* 7 (1993), 1–7.

⁶¹ D.R. Shackleton Bailey, 'Cicero and early Latin poetry', *ICS* 8 (1983), 239–49 at 249 (= *Selected Classical Papers* [Ann Arbor, 1997], 176–87 at 187).

works of Archias, which are probably best represented by the epigrams attributed to him in the *Palatine Anthology* (3588–3795 G–P). Instead, Cicero focusses on Archias as an epic poet, dwelling on his treatment in epic of his patron Lucullus' accomplishments in the Mithradatic wars and extemporizing verse, not epigram, in honour of his patrons. The praise that Cicero accords Archias' epics is consonant with his continuing advocacy of the early Roman poets (*Arch.* 18): *ea sic uidi probari ut ad ueterum scriptorum laudem perueniret*. In this respect Cicero, or the viewpoint that he represented, could serve as useful foil for the likes of Catullus in their construction of a Callimachean alternative to the influences of Hellenistic poetry that had prevailed until the fifties.

Cicero's conservative tastes in Hellenistic poetry developed early in his career at a time when, as a young man, he was associated with Archias, who himself espoused that aesthetic style. They were not a reaction to the advent of the so-called (by him) 'new poets'. By the time Catullus and his contemporaries were injecting new life into the Roman literary scene later in the fifties, Cicero's tastes were securely aligned, as they always had been, with Ennius and historical epics in the Hellenistic style, like Archias' or others that were the target of Catullus' Callimachean barbs. Cicero assimilated the traditions of Hellenistic poetry well before the intensification of interest in Callimachus that is particularly associated with Catullus and the neoterics.⁶² Cicero might well stand for the rejected stream of the Hellenistic tradition in Catullan polemic, but he could return their fire and in the appropriate rhetorical mode. One area in which Greek poets had contested over the legacy of the third century was in the competing constructions of the work of Antimachus of Colophon – 'fat and unrefined' (fr. 398 *παχὺ γράμμα καὶ οὐ τορόν*) according to Callimachus, or suitable for 'a refined ear' (*Anth. Pal.* 7.409.3 *τορὸν οὐδ'ας*) according to Antipater of Sidon, a poet a generation older than Cicero who, like Archias, was known to Catullus.⁶³ Cicero would have been well aware of Catullus' polemical use of Antimachus in praising Cinna's *Smyrna* (95b), when he offered this anecdote about Antimachus in his *Brutus* (191):

cum, conuocatis auditoribus legeret eis magnum illud, quod nouistis, uolumen suum et eum legentem omnes praeter Platonem reliquissent, 'legam' inquit 'nihilo minus: Plato enim mihi unus instar est centum milium.' et recte: poema enim reconditum paucorum adprobationem, oratio popularis adsensum uolgi debet mouere.

The representation of Antimachus' epic is familiar (*magnum uolumen*), but the terms in which it is defended appropriate the qualities in which Callimachean poetry is typically portrayed as appealing only to the learned few.⁶⁴ Antipater would have approved. The date is 46, a time when, as Cicero's other pronouncements show, the neoterics were on his mind, possibly because they had had some influence on his own career as a poet. We know of two other epics by Cicero: *De temporibus*

⁶² On this phase in the Roman encounter with Hellenistic poetry Fantuzzi and Hunter (n. 17), 464–7 are appropriately cautious, especially in remaining sceptical of an identifiable historical 'trigger', such as the arrival in Rome of Parthenius.

⁶³ Callimachus was writing of Antimachus' elegiac *Lyde*, in what context we do not know. In this epigram Antipater pointedly employs Callimachean imagery in extolling Antimachus' epic *Thebaid*. On the contested evaluations of Antimachus in the generations after Callimachus, see Knox (n. 29), 112–16. The source for Antipater's relationship with Catullus is Cic. *De or.* 3.194.

⁶⁴ For further discussion of this passage and its relevance to contemporary literary polemic, see Citroni (n. 30), 59–60.

suis, an epic in three books on his exile and return, which he was working on in the mid fifties,⁶⁵ and an epic on Caesar's invasion of Britain, of which we hear in 54.⁶⁶ No fragments survive from either work, and it is likely that neither was ever published. A number of reasons might account for this, including political tact,⁶⁷ but Cicero might well have found the literary climate sufficiently changed to be disinclined to submit his epic poetry to further criticism from the likes of Catullus.⁶⁸

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⁶⁵ The poem is sometimes conflated with *De consulatu suo*, but it was surely an independent composition; cf. Soubiran (n. 9), 33–41.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Q. fr.* 2.14(13).2, 3.1.4, 3.6(8).3, 3.7(9).6, all from 54, the last announcing the poem as *absolutum suaue*.

⁶⁷ Cf. Harrison (n. 52), 457–8 on possible reasons for withholding *De temporibus suis*, in spite of the praise it reportedly received from Caesar after reading the first book (*Q. fr.* 2.16.5): *neget se ne Graeca quidem meliora legisse*. As Hose (n. 47), 468–9 notes, Caesar, at least, was reading Cicero's poem in the context of Greek epic. On the epic to Caesar, see W. Allen, 'The British epics of Quintus and Marcus Cicero', *TAPhA* 85 (1955), 155–6.

⁶⁸ An early version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association in January 2007 in a panel honouring D.R. Shackleton Bailey. I wish to thank the anonymous reader for *CQ*, who laboured to save me from error, and I would also like to record my gratitude to 'Shack' for his teaching and his friendship.