

LEONIDES OF ALEXANDRIA'S ISOPSEPHIC EPIGRAMS

Chapter 1 analysed Callimachus' explicit rejection of counting as a form of poetic criticism and traced out the responses to that intervention in subsequent Greek and Latin poetry. Where Callimachus had sought to introduce a poetics that does not require numerical measurement since it focuses instead on the *sophia* – the sophistication – of the poem, later poets nevertheless found it necessary to address counting forms of criticism alongside an emphasis on their own slender poetry. Against the backdrop of Chapter 1's diachronic study, this chapter examines in details the output of a single Graeco-Roman poet of the mid-first century CE and his engagement with counting as a form of poetic criticism: Leonides of Alexandria and his isopsephic epigrams.

The practice of isopsephy is when the letters of the Greek alphabet are read according to their numerical value: $\alpha = 1$, $\beta = 2$, ... $\theta = 9$; $\iota = 10$, $\kappa = 20$, ... $\phi = 90$; $\rho = 100$, $\sigma = 200$, ... $\text{Ͱ} = 900$.¹ A certain word or phrase is then summed up according to the series of numbers it signifies and that phrase is then made numerically equal to another phrase. Literally, it is the making of pebbles – that is, accounts – equally. For example, Suetonius preserves the following apparently well-known isopsephic statement: Νέοψηφον· Νέρων ἰδίαν μητέρα ἀπέκτεινε ('A new count: Nero killed his own mother', *Nero* 39.2), where 'Nero' and 'killed his own mother' both add up to 1,005: an equivalence that reveals the nature of the emperor. While isopsephy

¹ Qoppa (Ϟ) and sampi (Ͱ), as well as digamma (Ϝ = 6), were obsolete in written Greek by the time that isopsephy had become a popular form, but they were kept as part of this system of numerical notation. Moreover, the old form of digamma, Ϝ, was rarely used for 6. Instead, the more common form was two gammas set together with one reverted and sometimes at a 90-degree angle; see Tod (1950) 135. This symbol was then conflated with the stigma, Ϛ, which came to be the typical notation for 6 from the time of Byzantine manuscripts onwards; see Jannaris (1907) 39. The precise development of this alphabetic system is debated. Tod (1950) 138 observes that it seems to be a late Hellenistic development in Attic, whereas Chrisomalis (2010) 134–44 and Mendell (2018) 200–3 provide some evidence for Hellenistic (and earlier) uses of the system.

was a pastime loathed by Aulus Gellius (*NA* 14.6.4–5), it was popular enough for isopsephic guides to be written on papyrus and isopsephic constructions to be indicated in inscriptions: it can be shown to carry a variety of meanings in different contexts, such as enumerating the name of a god or deciphering words in dreams.² Within the breadth of isopsephy as a game of numerical and alphabetic equivalences, it could be employed in poetry, as was the case with the epigrams composed by Leonides of Alexandria. Isopsephy in this context aimed to produce epigrammatic couplets of equal value or lines of equal value in a single distich.

In modern scholarship, Leonides has received short shrift. Johannes Geffcken's 1925 *Realencyclopädie* article on the epigrammatist describes him as a 'conceited versifier', a 'miserable *artiste*' and 'one of the most unpleasant little Greeks of the age'.³ In his *Further Greek Epigrams*, too, despite placing the textual integrity of Leonides' epigrams on a stronger footing, Denys Page could still comment that the poems would be 'contemptible to readers nowadays'.⁴ What is all the more surprising is that both scholars in addition do much to highlight Leonides' literary imitations of other epigrammatists and the political circles in which he moved.⁵ It is the mix of isopsephic 'parlour game' and epigram which has drawn out the critics' disdain.⁶ In recent years, however, analysis of literary play has become a serious business. Acrostics, palindromes and anagrams are now situated in a culture experimenting with multiple potential directions of reading,⁷ and pattern poems or *technopaignia* are frequently read against the long and

² See *POxy.* XLV 3239; Artem. 4.24, 3.45. For a summary of uses see Luz (2010) 247–325 and Ast and Lougovaya (2015).

³ Geffcken (1925): 'eingebildeter Verseschmied', 'kümmerlicher Künsteleien', 'Einer der unerfreulichsten Graeculi der Zeit'.

⁴ Page (1981) 504.

⁵ The extent of his Julio-Claudian patronage is unclear; the only evidence is the epigrams: addressed to Caesar (probably Nero or Vespasian) 1, 7; Agrippina 8; Poppaea 32 *FGE*. Page (1981) 505 judges him as equal to Antipater of Thessalonica, better than Antiphilus and Parmenion and sometimes indistinguishable from Leonidas of Tarentum.

⁶ See Page (1981) 505. Counting the couplets is 'a labour which even the most sympathetic critic has resented' (504). This may not be unbiographical.

⁷ Luz (2010) 1–77 offers a clear overview. Indispensable is Squire (2011) 216–28: 'acrostic materializes an intensified concern with the graphic and multilinear qualities of papyrus poetry: writing is understood not just as spoken word, but also a graphic script' (224).

vibrant tradition of ekphrastic epigrams.⁸ Similar benefit can be gained by re-evaluating the cultural importance of isopsephic epigrams.⁹

My strategy in this chapter is thus to read Leonides' use of isopsephy in epigrams as a development of the aesthetics of scale that I outlined in Chapter 1. That is, I take Leonides' fashioning of verses that contain large numerical accounts to address the same critical concern about how much content can be fitted into a limited extent that arose in Callimachus' Reply and in Antipater of Sidon's praise of Erinna. In this case, isopsephic epigrams advance an aesthetics of scale through the dual significance of Greek letters. This contrast of the large and small has its roots in Hellenistic mathematics and poetry, too. Apollonius of Perga was a younger contemporary of Archimedes working in Alexandria under Ptolemy Euergetes.¹⁰ Preserved in what remains of the second book of Pappus' *Collection* is Apollonius' method for multiplying numbers that are an integer multiple of ten between 1 and 9. The method divides each of the numbers into their 'base' and powers of ten for ease of computation; for example, the base of 400 is 4 and of 30, 3. Once all the numbers are separated in this way, the bases are multiplied, then also the powers of ten, and finally the two are multiplied together to reach final sum.¹¹ Apollonius exemplified this method of multiplication for the reader by multiplying the letters in a hexameter line.¹²

⁸ Luz (2010) deals with each of type of letter game, including Leonides' epigrams. For pattern poems see Luz (2010) 327–53; Squire (2010a); Kwapisz (2013a).

⁹ Nisbet (2003) 202–8 and Livingstone and Nisbet (2010) 119–21 do raise and discuss Leonides and his epigrams. The former only considers matters of identity and Page's editorial style, while the latter only mentions Leonides as part of an introductory volume on epigram. They do not ask how isopsephy relates to poetry.

¹⁰ According to Eutocius in his *Commentary on the Conics* [i.e. Apollonius']; see Heiberg (1974) 168.

¹¹ See Heath (1921) 1, 54–8 and Hultsch (1965) 2–29.

¹² This is one of two lines given in Pappus' text. The other is equally literary: Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Δημήτερος ἀγλαοκάρπου ('Sing, goddess, the wrath of Demeter, bringer of beautiful fruit', Pappus *Collection* p. 23.2). It is a clear adaptation of *Il.* 1.1 and, according to Pseudo-Justin Martyr (*Coh. ad Graec.* 17c2), it was from an Orphic poem. Perhaps its significance is that the line yields a large number just as Demeter is instrumental for large agricultural yields; for a similar connection between calculation and agriculture see Chapter 3, Section 3. I concur with Hultsch (1965) 26, Heiberg (1974) 124 and Netz (2009) 52 that the verse is probably not by Apollonius.

Leonides of Alexandria's Isopsephic Epigrams

Ἀρτέμιδος κλεῖτε κράτος ἔξοχον ἑννέα κοῦραι (Apollonius of Perga fr. 37 Heiberg = Pappus *Collection* p. 22.9)

Nine maidens, praise the most eminent power of Artemis (1, 100, 300, 5, 40, 10, 4, 70, 200, 20, 30, 5, 10, 300, 5, 20, 100, 1, 300, 70, 200, 5, 60, 70, 600, 70, 50, 5, 50, 50, 5, 1, 20, 70, 400, 100, 1, 10)

The verse, presumably of Apollonius' own devising, creates a context in which an opening invocation yields the sum of 196,036,848,000,000,000.¹³ This produces an unusual form of isopsephy in poetry; one would typically expect the verse to be 'counted' by means of addition. As Netz has shown, Apollonius' non-utilitarian numerical practice here can be understood as part of Greek mathematicians' interest in shocking and amazing their readership and in generating a 'carnival of calculation' as much as in producing a new notational form for multiplications.¹⁴ His choice of a hexameter line – and one invoking the Muses at that – takes a new approach to the interrelation of content and extension. The nine maidens of Apollonius are not only the nine Muses, but also the nine 'bases', the numbers 1–9, which form the basis of his multiplication method. In another case of an aesthetics of scale, these nine Muses generate large totals. Apollonius is not simply producing a new system more capable of delivering what poetry only rhetorically gestured at, he is testing traditional poetry's numerical capacity: just how much could a poem, and even a single line, contain? It turns out that the shortest of poems, not even past their invocatory verse, can compress large sums.

Isopsephy, however, was also a mode of reading poetry. Aulus Gellius records that a friend of his had listed all the verses of Homer where two consecutive lines had the same total (*NA* 14.6.5), but he does so only to disparage it as among those things

¹³ Perga possessed a wealthy sanctuary to Artemis; cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.95. Heiberg (1974) 124 connects this method with the *Okytokion* of Apollonius (fr. 36 Heiberg) known from other sources and labels the fragment above as such. Huxley (1967) connects the term ὤκυτόκιον with the use of ὠκυτόκος to describe the moon, an avatar of Artemis. If the former can be proved, then this is a stronger reason for thinking that his line is patriotic.

¹⁴ Netz (2009) 47–53 and 59. As Acerbi (2003) has shown, Apollonius seems elsewhere to have Hellenistic combinatorics in mind, the domain of mathematics in Greek antiquity in which 'numbers can be found only by an iterated sequence of complicated calculations' Netz (2009) 20. The carnival of calculation may thus inform Apollonius' wider arithmetic outlook.

which appear learned but are neither entertaining or useful (*NA* 14.6). He does not quote examples, but the later tradition has recorded some pairs (e.g. *Il.* 7.264–5 and 19.306–7).¹⁵ There is also evidence that isopsephic reading was applied to Euripidean drama. In the late first or early second century CE, Aelius Nicon, father of the physician Galen and a successful architect at Pergamum, had an isopsephic treatise on geometry inscribed upon a building which propounded the relation between the cone, sphere and cylinder.¹⁶ A further inscription (*IGRom.* 4.506), quite probably part of the same project, introduces the architect and contains a hymn, in which lines 2–4 directly echo and modify for the new context Euripides *Phoenissae* 3–5. Such an adaptation would have required first counting up Euripides' verses. The same can be said for the subsequent readers of the inscription, too: the literary game involves both scrutinising the verses isopsephically to confirm the numerical equivalences and examining their meaning in order to identify the Euripidean borrowing.

The earliest evidence for the critical games that could be had with such a mode of reading is found on a mid-third-century BCE inscription at the necropolis of Hermoupolis Magna in Egypt, comprising an iambic epigram for the Egyptian sage Petosiris upon his grave and a later response.¹⁷

Πετόσειριν αὐδῶ τὸν κατὰ χθονὸς νέκυν,
 νῦν δ' ἐν θεοῖσι κείμενον· μετὰ σοφῶν σοφός.
 κεφάλαιον τούτων τῶν ἱαμβείων
 εἰς ἀργύριον λόγον [δραχμαὶ] ,ητογ´.
 τούτου δὲ αὐτοῦ, ,βψκ´.

(*IMEGR* 125 = *SEG* 8.624–5)

I speak of Petosiris, a corpse in the earth, while now he lies among the gods:
 a sage among sages.

The summed amount of these iambs is 8,373 silver drachmas.

And of this, 2,720.

¹⁵ From the *Anecdota Graeca* edited by Jean François Boissonade; see Luz (2010) 251–2.

¹⁶ For an in-depth discussion of Nicon and his mathematical inscriptions see Thomas (2007) 92–103.

¹⁷ See Bernard (1969) 495–8 for further bibliography and discussion. The two hands are distinct, but the general similarity of style suggests that the response was written up soon after the poem.

Following the epigram, at some later date another hand has given its numerical value, reading the letters as numbers, and has suggested that this is the cost in drachmas of the epigram. The following inscription, whether written by the second hand or another, pokes fun at this counting by appending 'and of this': it does not gloss the total amount of the previous statement (i.e. 3–4: κεφάλαιον . . . , ητογ'), but self-referentially points to the amount of that very statement.¹⁸ The final line exposes the entire absurdity of counting the numerical value of epigrams, here possibly to critique the cost of public epigrams (think, perhaps, of the 15,000 bushels of wheat given to one Archimelus for a single epigram, Ath. 5.209b). It is an operation that could be applied to texts *ad infinitum*. The final line 'that sums itself' represents the result of such thinking: a text which is only there to make up the numbers. By the time Leonides composed his isopsephic epigrams, then, there was a pre-existing habit not only of experimenting with poetry that could contain large totals within a verse, but also of literary responses and criticism involving isopsephy (and criticism of that criticism, if my interpretation of the final line is to be followed).

My aim here is to examine Leonides' 'accounting' compositions and the literary critical positions with which he engages. More specifically, I trace how Leonides reinterprets and redeploys themes from Callimachus' poetry. As Chapter 1 demonstrated, Callimachus engaged in literary polemic which aimed to carve out a poetics not susceptible to numerical forms of criticism. This precedent, I propose, provides a foil for Leonides' representations of his own poetic products. In Section 1, I analyse a number of Leonides' epigrams and their allusions to Callimachus or use of Callimachean themes. I argue that Leonides responds to the Reply to the Telchines and its aesthetics of scale, but that he reintegrates numbers into the literary equation. The addition of numbers into his poems allows for short, compressed compositions which contain 'large accounts', and he gestures to this fact by also compressing Callimachean statements into his epigrams. The second and

¹⁸ , ητογ' signifies 8,373, which is the sum of the iambics, while τούτου δὲ αὐτοῦ adds up to , βψκ' (2,720): 3–4 add up to 5,847.

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third sections offer an extended discussion of a single epigram and its Callimachean resonances. Epigram 33 *FGE* describes the novelty of Leonides' isopsephic poetry and alludes to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*. Section 2 analyses the opening couplet and how it relates to other receptions of Callimachus' poetics. I also propose that Leonides places himself in a Callimachean literary tradition, at the same time as correcting Callimachus' reception elsewhere and offering a potential context for his own playful poems. Section 3 examines the second couplet and argues that Leonides programmatically reframes Callimachus' approach to poetic measurement by reinterpreting the image of the stream which concludes the *Hymn to Apollo*. By making Callimachus count, so to speak, he enters into a contemporary debate over poetic refinement and argues that enumerating epigrams are very much a Callimachean product. In response to his modern reception, I show both that Leonides is a sophisticated epigrammatist and that his poems attempt to grapple with a wider discussion about the interrelation of counting and criticism.

2.1 Callimachus Compressed

This section surveys a number of Leonides' epigrams which respond to Callimachus, tracing out where and to what end Leonides signals his enumerating verses through Callimachean intertexts. At the same time, I hope to demonstrate that, while Callimachus remains a constant through these poems, Leonides also shows himself well aware of, and seeks to upturn and innovate upon, the preceding traditions of epigrammatic poetry. It will further become clear that the 'Nile-born' Leonides adopts the stance of the earlier Alexandrian poet in negotiating his own position in relation not to the Ptolemies, but to the imperial family at Rome. His emulation of Callimachean themes extends to their political as well as poetic aspects.

First, an epigram by Leonides which looks to move programmatically from his typical two-couplet epigram form to a single couplet.

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εἷς πρὸς ἓνα ψήφοισιν ἰσάζεται, οὐ δύο δοιοῖς·
οὐ γὰρ ἔτι στέργω τὴν δολιχογραφήν.

(Leonides 6 *FGE* = *AP* 6.327)
(Line 1 = 2 = 4,111)

One [line] equals one in its *psēphoi*, not two to two. For I no longer love writing at length.

The couplet brings together various Callimachean passages. Leonides' dislike for writing at length combines two expressions of aesthetic judgement found in Callimachus' epigrams.

ἐχθαίρω τὸ ποίημα τὸ κυκλικὸν οὐδὲ κελεύθῳ
χαίρω τὶς πολλοὺς ὤδε καὶ ὤδε φέρει·
μισέω καὶ περιφοίτον ἐρώμενον, οὐδ' ἀπὸ κρήνης
πίνω· σικχαίνω πάντα τὰ δημόσια.

(Callimachus 2.1–4 *HE* = *AP* 12.43.1–4)

I hate the cyclic poem, nor do I enjoy the path which carries many this way and that. I hate the beloved who goes around, nor do I drink from the fountain. I loathe everything public.

μικρὴ τις, Διόνυσε, καλὰ πρήσσοντι ποιητῆ
ῥῆσις ὁ μὲν “νικῶ” φησί τὸ μακρότατον,
ᾧ δὲ σὺ μὴ πνεύσης ἐνδέξιός ἦν τις ἔρηται
“πῶς ἔβαλες” φησί, “σκληρὰ τὰ γιγνώμενα”.
τῶ μερμηρίζαντι τὰ μὴ ἔνδικα τοῦτο γένοιτο
τοῦπος, ἔμοι δ', ὦναξ, ἡ βραχυσυλλαβίη.

(Callimachus 58 *HE* = *AP* 9.566)

A short speech, Dionysus, is fine for an accomplished poet. For while one says ‘I win’ as the lengthiest thing, the other, on whom you do not breathe favourably, if asked ‘how did it go?’, says ‘things are tough’. Let that be the story of the one worrying about unjust things, O lord, but for me: concision.

The first epigram begins with a statement of poetic preferences, which then expands out to include other public goods. The target, introduced in the second couplet, is the beloved, who will be explicitly named and attacked in the third couplet (not given here). The second epigram contrasts the concision of the successful and unsuccessful poet: one says enough in two syllables, while the loser goes on at length about his luck. The use of *μακρότατον* recalls its application by Philemon in Chapter 1, where long-windedness was not a matter of length but unnecessary extension of speech. The same sense should be understood here: ‘I win’ is all

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that is necessary. The finally irony of the epigram is that the speaker, in recapitulating his opening claim about the poetic value of short speech, produces the verbose form βραχυσυλλαβίη.¹⁹ The epigram poses the question of whether the speaker practises what he preaches. Leonides manages to invert both sentiments in reaching the same poetic ends of valuing refinement: Callimachus' coinage βραχυσυλλαβίη is replaced by Leonides' contrasting coinage δολιχογραφία ('writing at length'), and Callimachus' verb of hating is replaced with a positive verb expressed in the negative.²⁰ This innovation is itself Callimachean, since Leonides specifically echoes Callimachus' claim of smallness by replacing one long six-syllable noun with another equally long. Leonides' allusion 'corrects' Callimachus (i.e. smooths away the irony) with a word which both *enacts* and *means* writing at length: a six-syllable noun in a two-line epigram creating another contrast of the large in the small.

A further intertext is significant here. The single couplet form recalls Callimachus' single couplet epigram on Theris.

σύντομος ἦν ὁ ξείνος, ὃ καὶ στίχος οὐ μακρὰ λέξων
Θῆρις Ἀρισταίου Κρής ἐπ' ἔμοι δολιχός.

(Callimachus 35 *HE* = *AP* 7.447)

Short was the visitor, for which reason the line 'Theris, Cretan, son of Aristaius', though not intending to be long-winded, is long on me.

There are two points of contact with Leonides' epigram. The concluding δολιχός ('long'), which tends to refer to length in either space or time, is echoed by Leonides' δολιχογραφία. Its use is not confined to Callimachus, but its position in the pentameter is found elsewhere only in Leonidas (72.6 *HE* = *AP* 7.726.6) and Dioscorides (5.4 *HE* = *AP* 5.55.4) before Leonides, which if nothing else guarantees it as a Hellenistic usage. The allusion to Callimachus is strengthened, though, by the fact that only in the case of Callimachus' epigram is there the same self-reflection on

¹⁹ For the further significance of short speech see Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2012) 57–62.

²⁰ Cf. LSJ *s.v.* βραχυσυλλαβίη and δολιχογραφία. The use of δολιχογραφία here recalls an epigram of Parmenion, an epigrammatist from Philip's *Garland*, who claims that the Muses do not like many-lined epigrams and that one should not seek the δόλιχον ('long-course', 11.2 GP).

the act of writing. In addition to the emphatic placing of *δολιχός*, there is also the concern with the small being paradoxically long by comparison to something else. In the case of Callimachus' epitaph, the comment seems to be that the short three-word name with demonym and patronym is still too long for a man of such short stature or short in speech. In the same way, when Leonides introduced the equivalence of one line to one, the two-to-two equivalence is what he appears to be describing as *δολιχογραφία* (cf. οὐ γὰρ ἔτι στέργω). In its form, rhetoric and allusiveness, then, Leonides' couplet looks to Callimachus' own couplet attesting to a penchant for short, concise compositions. Equally, he is able to distil Callimachean contrastive aesthetics further through his isopsephy: at the same time as Leonides cuts down his epigrams from two couplets to one and aims at literary smallness, the epigram's account remains in the thousands (8,222 in the present case).

A second isopsephic epigram continues to display a contrastive aesthetic by alluding to a pre-existing epigrammatic convention.

ἄλλος ἀπὸ σταλίκων, ὁ δ' ἀπ' ἠέρος, ὅς δ' ἀπὸ πόντου,
 Εὐπολι, σοὶ πέμπει δῶρα γενεθλίδια
 ἄλλ' ἐμέθεν δέξαι Μουσῶν στίχον ὅστις ἔς αἰεὶ
 μίμνει καὶ φιλίης σῆμα καὶ εὐμαθίης.

(Leonides 4 *FGE* = *AP* 6.325)
 (Lines 1 + 2 = 3 + 4 = 5,953)

One sends you birthday gifts from the hunting-nets, another from the sky, a third from the sea, Eupolis. But from me accept a line of the Muses, which will survive forever, a sign of friendship and good learning.

This poem for Eupolis enacts a 'compression' of epigram in epigram. The opening line alludes to a tradition inaugurated by Leonidas of Tarentum (66 *HE*) in which a fowler, a hunter and a fisherman dedicated gifts to the god Pan. Fifteen variations on the theme are preserved in the *Palatine Anthology*, each following a set of rules concerning content: 1) the dedication is to Pan; 2) the fowler must be called Pigres, the hunter Damis and the fisherman Cleitor; 3) they should be brothers; 4) they should dedicate their tools; 5) they should end with a prayer for success.²¹ As with numerous other epigram series which survive, literary innovation

²¹ See Page (1981) 88.

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within thematic limits is the aim.²² Leonides, however, is acutely aware of this tradition in his reworking. Following the ‘three hunting brothers’ theme, a reader might expect the address to be to Pan. He redirects the traditional address instead towards his friend as the literary brothers reach out to send him gifts on his birthday. More pointedly, though, in the second couplet Leonides outlines his own gift as a ‘line of the Muses’, where στίχος is most naturally taken as a singular (LSJ *s.v.* στίχος II.a).²³ Rather than indicating his epigram as a whole, Leonides is probably referring to his opening hexameter which not only resonates against the ‘three hunting brothers’ tradition, it scales down those epigrams of two or three couplets; encapsulating in a single line gifts from everywhere, from land, sea and sky. Here the isopsephic reading matches up to the literary game: just as Leonides can fit a whole epigrammatic tradition into one hexameter, those who have εὐμαθία see how he fits large and equivalent tallies into his two couplets.

Once again, though, Callimachus is also likely to be one of Leonides’ intertexts. The term εὐμαθῆ is particularly significant, and it is programmatic for one of Callimachus’ epigrams.

εὐμαθῆν ἤτεῖτο διδοῦς ἐμὲ Σῖμος Μίκκου
ταῖς Μούσαις, αἱ δὲ Γλαῦκος ὄκως ἔδοσαν
ἀντ’ ὀλίγου μέγα δῶρον.

(Callimachus 26.1–3 *HE* = *AP* 6.310.1–3)

Simos son of Miccus gave me to the Muses and asked for learning; and they, like Glaucus, gave it, a great gift in exchange for a little one.

The speaker in this epigram is Dionysus in the form of a statue, who goes on to lament that his dedication to the Muses by Simos, supposedly in a classroom, has meant that he has to hear the same trite line from Euripides’ *Bacchae*: ‘the lock is sacred’ (ἱερός ὁ πλόκαμος, 6: Euripides *Bacchae* 494). With typical irony, Callimachus’ final line queries just what this dedicatee is doing

²² The classic study of epigrammatic variation on a theme is Tarán (1979). Squire (2010b) teases out the poetics of epigrammatic replication and mimesis in epigrams on Myron’s cow (*AP* 9.713–42, 793–8 and Posidippus 66 AB).

²³ Cf. 2 *FGE*, mentioned briefly below, where analogously δίστιχον probably refers to only one couplet, although it is in any case corrupt; see Page (1981) 515. See also 33 *FGE* below, where δίστιχα refers to the two couplets.

with his 'great gift'. These lines, however, describe the contract between the Muses and the dedicatee with literary pretensions: a gift must be offered. Referring to the encounter of Diomedes and Glaucus in *Iliad* 6, he does not have the mention of the generation of the leaves in mind, but Glaucus' exchange of his gold armour for Diomedes' bronze (234–6). In that passage, Homer points out the relative value in numerical terms – 'gold for bronze, a hecatomb for nine oxen' (χρύσεα χαλκείων, ἑκατόμβοι ἔννεαβοίων, *Il.* 6.236) – while Callimachus is more interested in the contrast of large and small. Callimachus' passage is reworked by Crinagoras in concluding his dedicatory epigram on a finely wrought pen sent to one Proclus on his birthday.

πέμπει Κριναγόρης, δλίγην δόσιν ἀλλ' ἀπὸ θυμοῦ
πλείονος, ἀρτιδαεῖ σύμπτησον²⁴ εὐμαθίη.

(Crinagoras 3.5–6 GP = AP 6.227.5–6)

Crinagoras sends [this to you], a little gift but from a greater heart, an accompaniment to your recently learnt scholarship.

Crinagoras is reworking Callimachean themes.²⁵ The contrastive aesthetic has been inverted here, with the gift itself being small, but the impetus of friendship behind it being great. The term εὐμαθίη has been moved from the programmatic first position to the equally programmatic final position in the epigram. This move looks to have been inspired by its only use (on present evidence) between Callimachus and Crinagoras in Meleager's epigram on the coronis, the diacritical mark which ends a text: 'I sit enthroned at the boundary of learning' (σύνθρονος ἴδρυμαι τέρμασιν εὐμαθίας, 129.8 HE = AP 12.257.8). Crinagoras takes Meleager's 'learned' ending and combines it with Callimachus' gift-giving opening theme. Apollonides, Crinagoras' younger contemporary, echoes the position in the pentameter when he describes the consul Laelius, about to become a poet and write in the book 'of the Muses' (Μουσάων, 22.3 GP), seeing in a jay atop a tree 'a token of learning' (σύμβολον εὐμαθίης, 4). Leonides thus follows a later

²⁴ I print σύμπτησον here instead of Gow and Page's σύμπτησον, following the arguments of Ypsilanti (2018) 79.

²⁵ Although this goes unmentioned in Maria Ypsilanti's recent commentary; cf. Ypsilanti (2018) 78–9.

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Hellenistic tradition of reworking Callimachean epigrammatic themes. Whereas Crinagoras' finely wrought object is small in contrast to his great intent, Leonides follows Callimachus (and Apollonides) in identifying the Muses as enabling great artistry to inhere in short compositions.

The epigram responds to the theme of εὐμαθία in poetry introduced by Callimachus and developed by later epigrammatists, but I also want to propose that Leonides is building on themes found most clearly in Callimachus' twelfth *Iambus*. First, both are presents for birthdays. *Iambus* 12 celebrates the birth of the daughter of Leo, a friend of Callimachus. It is set on the seventh day after her birth, a traditional time at which the Amphidromia occurs, where the child is circled around the hearth and given presents. Whereas Leo's daughter has been born recently, it is more likely that Eupolis is older (cf. φιλιῆς σῆμα).²⁶ Second, the Muses are invoked in connection with Leonides' composition, much as the speaker in *Iambus* 12 addresses the plural 'goddesses' (θεαί, 18) – and then one specific goddess: τῆσδ' ἐτῆς εὐχῆ[σι .]..αἰσοομαι | Μοῦσα ('with these true prayers . . . I will sing, Muse', *Ia.* 12.19–20 Kerkhecker) – before offering his poem. Third, both describe in a poem the act of giving poetry as a gift. During the Amphidromia celebrations, Callimachus offers Leo's child the gift of a poem. The poem recounts the gathering of the gods for Hebe's birthday, at which each offers a present. Each god provides wonderful gifts, but Apollo bests them all by offering the gift of song, which he describes as being superior to the material gifts of the others.²⁷ There emerges a clear structure where Leo's daughter's celebration mirrors Hebe's and so Callimachus' gift echoes Apollo's.²⁸ Similarly, Leonides contrasts the material gifts of the three brothers, sourced from all sections of the cosmos, with his own isopsephic poetry. Although it is unclear due to the state of the text – Apollo says only that 'mine is the best gift for the child' (ἦ δ' ἐμὴ τῆ παιδὶ καλλίστη δόσις, 68) – the

²⁶ The diegete to the *Iambus* records that 'this was written for the seventh [day] for the daughter born to Leo' (τοῦτο γέγραπται εἰς ἕβδομα θυγατρίου γεννηθέντος Λέοντι, IX 25–7); the numerical nature of the ritual may have resonated with Leonides.

²⁷ For a summary of the narrative discernible from the fragments, see Kerkhecker (1999) 218–22 and Acosta-Hughes (2002) 104–22 with translation.

²⁸ The structure is noted at Kerkhecker (1999) 222 and Acosta-Hughes (2002) 120.

contrast with the other gods' presents is specifically that his will not perish. Likewise, Leonides' composition will 'remain forever' (ἐς αἰεὶ . . . μίμνει). Equally, however, the gifts which the other gods give to Hebe are described by the speaker as παιχνία ('toys', 'games', 27 and 33), and Apollo alludes to their gifts in a negative fashion by connecting material possessions, especially those made of gold, to human corruption and the disrespecting of the gods. Leonides seeks to reconcile these two attitudes of *Iambus* 12 in this epigram. His isopsephic epigram improves upon material objects and will last through the ages, but he also conceives of the epigrams as a form of toy: in 2 *FGE* his composition is 'a two-line plaything of clever eloquence' (δίστιχον εὐθίκτου παίγνιον εὐεπίης, 2). In addition to an emphasis on εὐμαθία in relation to a contrastive aesthetics of scale, Leonides draws on the Callimachean theme of the superiority of poetry as a gift over material goods (see 8 *FGE* below), but he manages to offer poetry from the Muses which is nonetheless also a 'toy'.

A slightly more straightforward epigram represents itself as a birthday present for Agrippina. Its themes recall those in the previous epigram by Leonides and confirm the location of the second couplet as a site for 'Callimachean reflection' on the preceding couplet.

ἄλλος μὲν κρύσταλλον, ὁ δ' ἄργυρον, οἱ δὲ τοπάζους
 πέμψουσιν, πλοῦτου δῶρα γενεθλίδια
 ἀλλ' ἴδ' Ἀγριππείνῃ δύο δίστιχα μοῦνον ἰσώσας
 ἄρκοῦμαι δῶροις ἅ φθόνος οὐ δαμάσει.

(Leonides 8 *FGE* = *AP* 6.329)
 (Lines 1 + 2 = 3 + 4 = 7,579)

One will send crystal, another silver and some again topaz, birthday gifts of wealth. But look, having only made two couplets equal for Agrippina, I am content with this gift which envy shall not conquer.

This poem operates, as the Milan Posidippus now illuminates, in a rich tradition of epigrams responding to precious stones which dates from the Hellenistic period, a tradition which often develops a metapoetic tone by setting material against literary value.²⁹ It also echoes the structure of 4 *FGE*, with the three terms in the

²⁹ See Petrain (2005).

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opening hexameter and the contrast with Leonides' gift in the second couplet; it compresses an epigrammatic theme or commonplace into the first line and offers it as a gift in the second. The second couplet comments on the novelty.

As Jan Kwapisz has recently suggested with regards to this epigram, there is additional playfulness in referring to precious gems.³⁰ The etymology of isopsephy alludes to the material context of accounting in the ancient world, and Leonides seems to play with the meaning of ψῆφος here; the extravagant precious gems of the opening line contrast with Leonides' own implied ψῆφοι in the background. An emphasis on poetic longevity set in contrast to the force of envy (or Envy), furthermore, parallels the reworking of *Iambus* 12 in 4 *FGE* by means of a further allusion to Callimachus. As I will argue in Sections 2 and 3, Leonides makes an extended and sophisticated allusion to the end of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*. In this epigram, Leonides looks to supplement a key term which is absent from 33 *FGE*. In the *Hymn to Apollo*, Callimachus succeeds in banishing Blame to where Envy has already fled (113), and 33 *FGE* focuses on sending Blame away (see below). In the context of a self-arranged epigram book, Leonides, gesturing overtly to his isopsephic innovation, would again be warding off criticism by resuming the Callimachean mode encountered earlier (or at least, elsewhere) in his collection. Leonides' compositional novelty brings a charm which ensures Agrippina's fame, while equally his poetic defence against potential 'private criticism' (φθόνος) now also extends to his royal addressee. As in many Callimachean passages (e.g. *Aetia* fr. 1 Harder), Leonides' pre-emptive strike in this epigram ensures his novel, royal gift is not left open to criticism: he produces tough-as-rock poems that are worthy gifts for the imperial family.³¹

A fourth epigram takes gifts to the imperial family in a different direction.

θύει σοι τόδε γράμμα γενεθλιακαῖσιν ἐν ᾧραις,
Καῖσαρ, Νειλαίη Μοῦσα Λεωνίδεω·

³⁰ Kwapisz (2017) 185.

³¹ In a real sense, too, it may be thought that the isopsephic technique would prevent textual corruption, since this would immediately be clear from the unequal tallies.

Leonides of Alexandria's Isopsephic Epigrams

Καλλιόπης γὰρ ἄκαπνον αἰεὶ θύος· εἰς δὲ νέωτα
ἦν ἐθέλητις θύσει τοῦδε περισσότερα.

(Leonides Epigram 1 *FGE* = *AP* 6.321)
(Lines 1 + 2 = 3 + 4 = 5,699)

The Muse of Egyptian Leonides offers this epigram to you, Caesar, on your birthday. The offering of Calliope is always smokeless. But next year, if you wish, she will sacrifice even more than this.

Leonides figures his epigram as a gift and the giver as the Muse of poetry herself. This epigram is no mere plaything; it is (styled as) a signal of the Muse's wish to acknowledge and celebrate Caesar's (probably either Nero's or Vespasian's) birthday. The opening of line 3, importantly, looks to echo a fragment of Callimachus.

ἄκαπνα γὰρ αἰὲν ἄοιδοί
θύομεν

(Callimachus fr. 494 Pf.)

We poets always offer smokeless sacrifices . . .

The imagery appears elsewhere in Greek literature, but Leonides' line is notable for its closeness of form, not to mention its closeness in time.³² Its preservation in the epitome of Athenaeus (1.8e) does not reveal whether it originally had a political context. What does seem likely is that it is part of Callimachus' use of sacrificial imagery in order to frame his poetry as also a gift to the gods. In the Reply to the Telchines, Apollo appears to Callimachus and offers him advice.

τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον
θρέψαι, τῆ]ν Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην·

(Callimachus *Aetia* fr. 1.23–4 Harder)

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

Apollo's command sets up a contrast between two different offerings to the gods, a poetic composition and ritual sacrifice, and in particular marks the differing criteria of quality.³³ Leonides mixes the terms of this Callimachean parallelism in his opening line: what is being 'sacrificed' or offered is this very epigram.

³² For further references see the *apparatus* of Pfeiffer (1949) *ad loc.*

³³ For the religious background to this see Petrovic (2012) 296–7.

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Two things are remarkable about the allusion. First, if Callimachus in the fragment also advances a parallelism that sets poetry and sacrifice as two means of pleasing the gods, then Leonides changes this religious claim into a political statement, as the Muse now sacrifices to a ruler. Once offerings were given up to the gods, now both appear subservient to the emperor. Second, if the Reply to the Telchines is also recalled when reading Leonides' epigram, then line 4 toys with Apollo's directive and Callimachus' parallel of sacrifice and song. In the future Leonides promises to sacrifice 'greater things', 'more excessive things', or adverbially 'more greatly', 'even more' (LSJ *s.v.* περισσός, literally 'beyond the regular number'). For a sacrificial offering, this is a boon for the gods and so for Caesar. Yet as Leonides makes clear in the first line, what is 'sacrificed' or offered is the poem. A promise for a greater *poem* appears to contradict Apollo's order as represented in Callimachus. Leonides' isopsephic epigrams, however, with their contrastive aesthetics of scale operating through the dual significance of Greek letters, can metaphorically bypass this contrast between a large sacrifice and a slender poem. With verses adding up to thousands, he can produce slender poems which are also large offerings. It is fascinating in this respect that a further epigram by Leonides explicitly mentions a sacrifice to Caesar (likely Nero) which specifies 100 oxen to be slaughtered (29 *FGE* = *AP* 9.352; $1 + 2 = 3 + 4 = 7,218$). As Page notes, 'hecatomb' was rarely an actual sacrifice of so much and Leonides' specificity here suggests an important occasion.³⁴ By the same token, of course, it might be read as responding to 1 *FGE*. Leonides promised more. 29 *FGE* delivers by making a 'hecatomb' (a word itself notably absent) true to its numerical claim, vastly improving on the singular offering of 1 *FGE*, while on the isopsephic level, the count goes up from 5,699 to 7,218. What is important to note about 1 *FGE*, and potentially also about 29 *FGE*, is how Leonides pulls Callimachus' self-description in fr. 494 Pf. in two directions. Callimachus' imagery is redeployed in order to underscore the contrastive aesthetics of Leonides' innovative isopsephic epigrams, but also in order to strike up

³⁴ Page (1981) 533.

a relationship with the imperial family. Leonides' allusion in 1 *FGE* suggests Callimachus as a model of poetic self-presentation with respect to one's literary production but also with respect to a poem's function within a broader set of political concepts related to the ruling power – in this case the emperor as a divinity to whom people ought to sacrifice.

The dual poetic and political aspects of Leonides' poetry and Callimachus' influence on both finds its most complex expression in another epigram to Caesar (either Nero or Vespasian).

τὴν τρίτῃτην Χαρίτων ἀπ' ἔμευ πάλι λάμβανε βύβλον,
 Καῖσαρ, ἰσηρίθμου σύμβολον εὐπέτης,
 Νεῖλος ὅλως καὶ τήνδε δι' Ἑλλάδος ἰθύουσσαν
 τῆι χθονὶ σῆι πέμψει δῶρον ἀοιδότατον.³⁵

(Leonides Epigram 7 *FGE* = *AP* 6.328)
 (Lines 1 + 2 = 3 + 4 = 7,372)

Caesar, once more accept from me this book, the third of the Graces, as a token of eloquence equal in number; the Nile will in any case also send it straight through Greece to your land, a most poetic gift.

In this opening to a third book of isopsephic epigrams (after 6 and 33 *FGE*, perhaps?), Leonides gifts his work to Caesar, transmitting his poems from Alexandria to Caesar's land (either Rome or Italy broadly speaking; cf. Ἴταλιδαίς, 'Italians', at 21.2 *FGE*). A number of intertexts come into view when reading this poem, which open up both a numerical and political relationship between poet and addressee.

On first reading, Leonides makes a connection between reading and counting with his reference to a third Grace. In the same way that his handling of εὐμαθῆ showed that his reception of Callimachus is mediated through subsequent epigrammatists, 7 *FGE* similarly recalls an epigram which opens with an accounting that was composed by Antipater of Thessalonica, an Augustan poet patronised by L. Calpurnius Piso.

³⁵ The epigram is corrupt in the MSS. I have printed the corrections which Page (1981) 518–9 suggests but does not print, even though he made the sense perfectly acceptable and the couplets equal. I diverge from that, however, in that instead of πρῶν in line 1 I print ἀπ' as recorded in the *codex Palatinus*, which, although not mentioned in Page's correction, is required to reach the 7,372 that he was working towards.

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τέσσαρες αἰωροῦσι τανυπτερύγων ἐπὶ νώτων

Νίκαι ἰσηρίθμους υἱέας ἀθανάτων,
ἀ μὲν Ἀθαναίαν πολεμαδόκον, ἀ δ' Ἀφροδίταν,
ἀ δὲ τὸν Ἀλκείδαν, ἀ δ' ἀφόβητον Ἄρη
σεῖο κατ' εὐόροφον γραπτὸν τέγος, ἔς δὲ νέονται
οὐρανόν. ὦ Ρώμας Γαίε πάτρας ἔρυμα,
θεῖη ἀνίκαιον μὲν ὁ βουφάγος ἀ δέ σε Κύπρις
εὐγάμον, εὐμητιν Παλλάς, ἄτρεστον Ἄρης.

(Antipater of Thessalonica 46 GP = AP 9.59)

Four Victories lift on their wide-winged backs an equal number of children of the Immortals. One [holds] war-confronting Athena, one Aphrodite, one Alcides, one fearless Ares, on your fine painted ceiling; and they are heading to heaven. O Gaius, bulwark of your country Rome, may the ox-devourer make you invincible, the Cyprian happy in marriage, Pallas wise in council, Ares unflinching.

The presence of such a rare form as ἰσηρίθμος ('equal in number') in the first pentameter in both epigrams is too specific to be a coincidence.³⁶ In Antipater's epigram, four gods supported by Victories and painted on Gaius' house roof are described as gifting him the qualities in which they themselves excel. The gift in Leonides' epigram is more modest: only one Grace, as opposed to the attributes of four gods, and instead of these Victories transporting the gods heavenwards, Leonides sends his gift directly to Caesar. It seems that Leonides took inspiration from an earlier epigrammatist who also addressed his poem to a member of the Julio-Claudian family. Antipater's description, moreover, recalls an epigram by Callimachus describing the Graces.

τέσσαρες αἱ Χάριτες, ποτὶ γὰρ μία ταῖς τρισὶ κείναις
ἄρτι ποτεπλάσθη κῆτι μύροισι νοτεῖ.
εὐαίων ἐν πᾶσιν ἀρίζηλος Βερενίκα,
ἕς ἄτερ οὐδ' αὐταὶ ταὶ Χάριτες Χάριτες.

(Callimachus 15 HE = AP 5.146)

Four are the Graces; for one besides those three has just been fashioned and is still wet with perfume. Happy Berenice, resplendent among all, without whom the Graces themselves are not Graces.

³⁶ They are in the same *sedes*, but this is the only possible place for the word in the pentameter. Nevertheless, the word could have been placed in the hexameter. I thus take the corresponding placement as intentional.

Antipater's opening word echoes Callimachus' epigram, but he varies the vision: not four statues of the Graces, but an image of four Victories.³⁷ Whereas Callimachus equates Berenice with a Grace, in effect deifying her, Antipater chooses instead to figure Gaius as receiving certain divine attributes. If, according to Gow and Page, the epigram can be dated to around 1 BCE, then perhaps this is due to Augustus' tight control over the imperial cult and the deification of rulers while he was still alive.³⁸ Leonides here follows Callimachus in his mention of the Graces in the opening line, in a metrical position (across the second and third feet) that has an association with the counting up of Graces in epigram. Meleager makes repeated play on the number of Graces, using the same opening position twice (39 *HE* = *AP* 5.195 and 74 *HE* = *AP* 9.16), and further epigrams by him and others suggest Callimachus' poem could readily come to mind.³⁹ If Leonides' third Grace does not in fact directly point a reader to Callimachus' epigram, it nevertheless places the poem in an epigrammatic tradition of counting up Graces that has Callimachus as its origin point.

By describing a third Grace while looking to other epigrams with four as well as three goddesses in their opening verse, Leonides makes the reader count on a level additional to his isopsephic tally. And it is worth being clear about what ἰσηριθμός refers to in Leonides' epigram. On one level, the three Graces are the object of comparison for which his book offers a token of equal-numbered eloquence. At another level, an 'eloquence which is equal in number' or an 'equal-numbering eloquence' refers to Leonides' own isopsephy. Understanding ἀριθμός as 'worth' or

³⁷ For other possible variations on Callimachus' epigram cf. *AP* 5.95, 5.183, 5.357, 9.585.

³⁸ Gow and Page (1968) II, 57.

³⁹ Meleager plays with the three-ness of the Graces also at 30, 32, 43 and 47 *HE*. It may be thought that Meleager is more likely to be (re-)echoing this theme in reference to his earlier Menippean prose work the *Graces*, but the doubling of a form of χάρις at the end of the final pentameter at 32, 40 and 47 *HE* suggests that Callimachus' epigram is nonetheless intended to be evoked. For a similar argument see now Gutzwiller (2019) 110–11. *AP* 5.95 is undated (although interleaved between epigrams by Rufinus and Meleager), as is 9.515 (between epigrams by Crinagoras), but both nonetheless are focused on enumerating the Graces. The same can be said of *AP* 9.609a and 9.680. This is not, though, a universal rule: Rhianus 1 *HE* opens with the Graces in a humorous context addressing a boy's backside, and Tymnes 4 *HE* deals with a bird dear to the Graces.

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‘rank’ (LSJ *s.v.* ἀριθμός I.5.), it might also reflect Leonides’ self-evaluation on a more concrete level, either in relation to Caesar or to the Romans more generally, or in relation to the other epigrams that develop the Callimachean tradition of counting up Graces. This ambiguity would allow for further interpretive games for the reader, sending them to, *inter alios*, Antipater then Callimachus counting up their respective Graces and Victories, asking them to interrogate what the very idea of things being ἰσῆριθμος means.

Leonides also sets out the cultural stakes of his poem, but in a less obvious and more allusive fashion. His last three verses together draw phrases and imagery from Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos* in representing the transfer of his poetic book to Rome. First, there is the term ἰσῆριθμος. In the hymn, Apollo prophesies how the Galatians as ὀψίγονοι Τιτῆνες (‘late-born Titans’, 174) will attack the Greeks ῥώσωνται νιφάδεσσιν ἔοικότες ἢ ἰσάριθμοι | τείρεσιν (‘rushing on like snowflakes, or in numbers equalling the stars’, 175–6).⁴⁰ Granted, here the alpha is short in contrast to the long etas in the epigrammatic examples, and similarly the word appears in the final position, unlike the position in Leonides and Antipater. As Chapter 3, Section 3 will further evidence, however, ἰσῆριθμος does have a certain currency in Hellenistic poetic passages relating to numbers, and as a close reader of Hellenistic poetry it is plausible that Leonides is alluding to such a usage.⁴¹ The similarity between Leonides’ and Callimachus’ use is that both index a contact of cultures: Greeks and Galatians, Romans and Greeks. In advancing his Egyptian identity in the face of a Roman audience, the Nile-born Leonides – as he repeatedly tells his reader (1.2, 29.1–2, 30.4, 32.2 *FGE*) – presents his gift as measuring up to Roman expectations in a world where it is now the Greeks and not the Galatians that are the subdued people.

Second, there is the fact that the Nile sends the book through Greece on its way to Caesar’s land. In Callimachus’ hymn, Delos (in her former guise as Asteria) offers herself as a location for Apollo’s birth after Leto’s search for a place willing to receive her. Leto rests by the river Inopus, ‘which the earth sends forth most

⁴⁰ See Mineur (1984) 172.

⁴¹ Cf. Archimedes *SH* 201.24 and Lycophron *Alexandra* 1258.

abundantly at the time when the Nile in full flow comes down from the Ethiopian heights' (ὄν τε βάθιστον | γαῖα τότ' ἔξανίησιν, ὅτε πλῆθοντι ῥεέθρῳ | Νεῖλος ἀπὸ κρημνοῖο κατέρχεται Αἰθιοπῆος, 206–8). Callimachus here refers to the belief that the river Inopus had a subterranean connection with the Nile, just as the river Arethusa in Syracuse was considered by some to have been fed by the Alpheius in the Peloponnese.⁴² He uses the site at which Apollo, the god of song, is to be born in order to connect Delos as part of 'Old Greece' with the new Greek territory of Egypt from which he writes. The belief brings Callimachus' own context and praise of Apollo into a much closer (geographical) relation with the god's origins. In what survives of Leonides' poetry, the overriding audience is presented as Roman and the poet as Egyptian; there is nothing marked as Greek in the epigrams whether topical or reworking commonplace themes. Leonides could have simply sent the poetry from Egypt to Rome, but he does not. I therefore take it as probable that the trajectory which connects the Nile with Greece, before moving to Caesar's land, is motivated by the implicit reference to that geographical belief mentioned in Callimachus' hymn. Leonides signals his debt to Callimachus' geographical bridging of Egypt and Apollo's Delos and at the same time adds Rome as the final stop on this journey in order to reflect the new political context of his Alexandrian poetry, which is in dialogue with Rome as well as with old Greece.

Third, there is the superlative adjective ἀοιδότατος ('most poetic') in line 4, which as Page notes has a certain Hellenistic currency.⁴³ It is employed later in the *Hymn to Delos* to describe the swans: ἀοιδότατοι πετεηνῶν ('the most musical of birds', 252). They circle seven times around Delos as Apollo is born, having come from Maeonian Pactolus in Asia Minor. The numerical frequency of this act is marked by the use of ἑβδομάκις ('seven times'), 'an absolute *hapax eiremenon* in Greek'; perhaps Leonides noticed the striking phrase that captured the numerical

⁴² For further references concerning the belief and bibliography see Mineur (1984) 186. The myth of Alpheius following the nymph Arethusa and so flowing into the Syracusan river was known already to Pindar (*Nem.* 1.1) and was developed by Ovid (*Met.* 5.573–641). Strabo considers them to be similar (ly unbelievable) geographical theories (6.2.4).

⁴³ Cf. e.g. Theoc. *Id.* 12.7 and Dioscorides 36.6 *HE*. Page (1981) 519.

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nature of their action.⁴⁴ As the swans left Pactolus and flew to Delos, so Leonides' own most poetic gift leaves Egypt and makes its way to Rome, and not to the heavens as in Antipater's epigram. What emerges – in admittedly allusive fashion – is that Leonides modifies three points of cultural and geographical contact and connection in the *Hymn to Delos* and does so in order to signal his own poetic transfer between two cultures, two empires and two capitals. Suggesting such a transfer through Callimachean models once again places him as a new Callimachus within these shifting geographies of power.

Even more tentative but nevertheless worth noting is the ending of the first pentameter. It has a particularly Callimachean ring; σύμβολον ('token') followed by a noun in the genitive and preceded by a further noun or adjective modifying the latter noun occurs first in extant epigram in Callimachus' epigram on Aratus: χαίρετε λεπτταί | ῥήσεις Ἀρήτου σύμβολον ἀγρυπνίης ('hail, subtle discourses, the token of Aratus' sleeplessness', Callimachus Epigram 56.3–4 *HE* = *AP* 9.507.3–4). In the epigram, σύμβολον ἀγρυπνίης ('token of sleeplessness') is a conjecture, whereas *AP* reads σύντονος ἀγρυπνίη ('concise sleeplessness') and a version preserved in two of the Aratean *Vitae* reads σύγγονος ἀγρυπνίης ('sibling of sleeplessness').⁴⁵ In recent times, Selina Stewart has proposed σύντομος ἀγρυπνίη, and it is indeed easy to see how it might fit with Callimachean ideas of concision, as well as how it might have been corrupted to σύγγονος and σύντονος in transmission.⁴⁶ I continue to read σύμβολον ἀγρυπνίης, however. This reading of such a widely read epigram provides a good explanation for the stylistic habit in subsequent epigrammatists of having a pentameter, often the final one, end with similar phrasing built around σύμβολον, something not shared by σύντονος or σύγγονος.⁴⁷ Leonides is certainly one of these later epigrammatists following Callimachus' style, but there may be

⁴⁴ Mineur (1984) 208.

⁴⁵ The conjecture was proposed by Ruhnken; see Gow and Page (1965) I, 71. It is endorsed by both Pfeiffer (1953) *ad loc.* and Gow and Page (1965) II, 209. σύντομος is argued for by Cameron (1972) and more extensively at Cameron (1995) 374–5.

⁴⁶ Stewart (2008).

⁴⁷ Cf. e.g. τρισσῶς σύμβολα καλλοσύνας (*AP* 5.195.2, Meleager); ξυνηῆς σύμβολα σωφροσύνης (12.158.6, Meleager); ὑμετέρης σύμβολον ἡλικίης (5.118.4, Marcus

something more to its use. Leonides presents himself as having formerly been a devotee of astronomy and only recently become a poet (21 *FGE* = *AP* 9.344) and in another poem gifts 'an imitation of the skies' (οὐράνιον μείμημα, 32.1 *FGE* = *AP* 9.355.1) to Poppaea Augusta, the wife of Nero. It would be particularly apt for a poet who thinks of himself also as an astronomer to present his poems as a symbol of his own literary skill in the language that Callimachus had used for Aratus' *Phaenomena*, the quintessential poem of astronomy.

In each epigram, there is a question of just how close Leonides' imitation of Callimachus is and to what extent it is mediated through intervening epigrammatists. Nevertheless, the cumulative evidence makes it probable that Leonides is engaged in a concerted programme of allusions to the famous Alexandrian poet and his aesthetics. It is, moreover, a playful engagement in that Callimachus' aesthetic pronouncements are juxtaposed with poems that can be counted in the most literal of senses. And I do not think this is an accident of survival or of the selection of Leonides' poems preserved in the later collections. My proposal in the following two sections is that one epigram in particular demonstrates that Leonides' aim is specifically to reformulate Callimachus' poetics and to introduce counting back into poetic criticism.

2.2 Cups and Sources

One of Leonides' epigrams above all others deserves closer inspection: it provides a programmatic Callimachean introduction to a book of isopsephic poetry and engages in contemporary reflections on the influence and nature of Callimachus' poetics.

οἴγνυμεν, ἔξ ἑτέρης πόμα πίδακος ὦστ' ἄρυσασθαι,
 ξεῖνον μουσοπόλου γράμμα Λεωνίδεω·
 δίστιχα γὰρ ψήφοισιν ἰσάζεται. ἀλλὰ σύ, Μῶμε,
 ἔξιθι κήφ' ἑτέρους δέξυν ὀδόντα βάλει.

(Leonides 33 *FGE* = *AP* 9.356)
 (Line 1 + 2 = 3 + 4 = 7,673)

Argentarius); βαρβαρικᾶς σύμβολα ναυφορίας (7.73.2, Geminus); Φιλιππηΐτης σύμβολον ἠγορέης (9.288.2, Geminus).

2.2 Cups and Sources

We open, so as to draw off a drink from another spring, the unfamiliar writing of Muse-serving Leonides. The couplets are equal in *pséphoi*. But away with you, Blame, sink your sharp tooth into others.

The epigram introduces the poet and the strange nature of his work in the first pentameter, yet it is the initial hexameter which figures it as a programmatic piece (οἴγνυμεν, ‘we open’). Its wording is a cause for comment. For Page, the reader ought rather to expect οἴγνυμεν . . . πίδακα (‘we open a spring’).⁴⁸ I would prefer to read οἴγνυμεν as governing γράμμα and to understand the rest of the hexameter as providing the metaphor for that action. To draw a drink from a stream is an idea attested in Posidippus’ poem on a shrine to the Nymphs in honour of Arsinoe: ἡ δ’ ἄφ’ Ὑμηττοῦ πέτρος ἔρευγομένη πόμα κρήνης | ἐκδέχεται σπιλάδων ὑγρά διαινομένη (‘the stone of Hymettus, gushing from the caves, receives a drink from the spring, glistening with water, 113.10–11 AB = SH 978.10–11). It is perhaps more clearly seen in an epigram preserved in the *Paradoxographus Florentinus*, a collection roughly contemporary with Leonides: the poem inscribed above the spring commands any thirsty goatherds ‘to draw a drink from the spring’ (τῆς μὲν ἀπὸ κρήνης ἄρυσαι πόμα, Anon. 143a.3 FGE).⁴⁹ A drink as an image for poetry is at least as old as Pindar, who at the end of *Nemean* 3 sends to his patron, Aristocleides, his ‘cup of song’ brimming with honey and milk (πόμ’ αἰοιδιμον, 79). At the same time, of course, the syntax encourages wordplay on the idea of partaking of a new vintage from the jar or cup which one opens: an equally programmatic image.⁵⁰ Leonides here draws on both cups and streams in metaphorising his novel composition. This and the following section intend to trace out the Hellenistic and Callimachean aspects of these images and how they are used to present but also justify the presence of isopsephy in his epigrams.

⁴⁸ Page (1981) 536. ⁴⁹ For the dating see Page (1981) 451.

⁵⁰ πόμα could be understood as a version of πῶμα in the sense of ‘lid’ or of ‘cup’, cf. LSJ s. ν. πῶμα A and B. I can find no instances of a lid covering a stream, so I think that the most likely play would be on the opening of a new draught rather than of a lid or covering to a spring.

First, let me state what I see to be the key connection to Callimachus. Christine Luz has proposed that in the epigram – a point surprisingly missed by Page – ἐξ ἑτέρης . . . πίδακος echoes the end of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*.⁵¹ Likewise, on my reading it is the mention of a πίδαξ in line 1 and the address to Momus in lines 3 and 4 which I take to be an allusion to the hymn, where Apollo responds to the criticisms that Phthonos whispered in his ear. Here is Apollo's response and Callimachus' concluding line:

ὁ Φθόνος Ἀπόλλωνος ἐπ' οὐατα λάθριος εἶπεν
 “οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν αἰοιδὸν ὃς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος αἰεῖδει.”
 τὸν Φθόνον ὠπόλλων ποδὶ τ' ἤλασεν ὥδέ τ' ἔειπεν·
 “Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ
 λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι σурφетὸν ἔλκει.
 Δηοῖ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,
 ἀλλ' ἦτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει,
 πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς ἄκρον ἄωτον.”
 χαῖρε, ἄναξ· ὁ δὲ Μῶμος, ἴν' ὁ Φθόνος, ἐνθα νέοιτο.⁵²

(Callimachus *Hymn to Apollo* 105–13)

Phthonos spoke secretly in Apollo's ear: “I do not love the poet who does not sing as much as the sea.” Apollo kicked Phthonos with his foot and said the following: “Great is the flow of the Assyrian river, but it drags all filth from the earth and much refuse in its waters. Bees do not carry water to Deo from everywhere, but from a small stream, pure and undefiled, which comes from a holy spring, the highest choice of waters.” Greetings, lord. But as for Blame, let him go where Envy dwells!

Apollo's contrast of the large Euphrates and the small stream has typically been read as reflecting Callimachus' preference for small and refined poetry over long epic.⁵³ Its use by Leonides would certainly make a pointed introduction to a collection of epigrams, the genre *par excellence* for poetic smallness and refinement. On the one hand, the allusion in a programmatic epigram at the start of the collection to Callimachus' programmatic conclusion would emphasise literary continuity through its very subject matter; (the spirit of) Callimachus' poem ‘flows’ naturally into Leonides' own works, like the water from a stream into a cup. On the other hand,

⁵¹ Luz (2010) 256–8. ⁵² The text follows Williams (1978).

⁵³ See e.g. Williams (1978) 85–97; Köhnken (1981); Traill (1998); Stephens (2015) 98.

2.2 Cups and Sources

Leonides marks his innovation while alluding to his predecessor: a notably Callimachean stream in its allusiveness, it is nevertheless different and new.

Leonides, though, was not the only epigrammatist to allude to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* passage. Antipater of Thessalonica lambasted those poets who drink κρήνης ἕξ ἱερῆς . . . λιτὸν ὕδωρ ('the simple water from the holy fountain', 20.4 GP = AP 11.20.4). Instead he pours libations to Archilochus and Homer; his cup οὐ δέχεθ' ὕδροπότοτος ('does not receive water-drinkers', 6). In reference to Callimachus' reception in this epigram, Peter Knox has argued persuasively that this contrast between water and wine as inspirational sources does not seem to exist before Antipater. Rather, his epigram is innovative in alluding to Callimachus' stream – possibly also to Hippocrene on Helicon from the *Dream* at the beginning of *Aetia* 1 – as a pedantic mode of bookish poetry and, in opposition, wine as the force behind the 'authentic' poetry of Archilochus and Homer.⁵⁴ Antipater reframes Callimachus' metapoetic images; what was a matter of the source's purity has been turned into its nature *qua* water. Writing in the wake of Antipater's epigram, Leonides would have likely encountered both this negative approach to, and other more faithful readings of, Callimachus' poetics. This observation helps make sense of Leonides' opening line, which is not simply a Callimachean stream, but a 'drink' from it. Contrary to Antipater of Thessalonica's allusion, Callimachus was not teetotal, as he emphasises in his own epitaph.

Βαττιάδεω παρὰ σῆμα φέρεις πόδας εὖ μὲν ἀοιδῆν
εἰδότος, εὖ δ' οἴνω καίρια συγγελάσαι.

(Callimachus 30.1–2 HE = AP 7.415.1–2)

You set your feet beside the tomb of Battus' son, who knows well both song and how to join together in laughter over wine at the right time.

More than this, though, in another passage of the *Aetia*, Callimachus depicts himself drinking at a symposium. The fact that, like himself, his drinking companion from Icus, Theugenes, enjoys small cups (ὀλίγω δ' ἦδετο κισσουβίω, fr. 178.12 Harder)

⁵⁴ Knox (1985). For a biography of Antipater see Gow and Page (1968) II, 18–21.

has also been read as intimating Callimachus' preference for poetic refinement over excessively large works, oxymoronically making small Polyphemus' monstrous *κισσυβίον* ('rustic cup') in the *Odyssey* (9.346).⁵⁵ Later on in the same passage, Callimachus states that wine needs both water and conversation mixed into it and so exhorts that the two symposiasts 'add it to the harsh drink as an antidote' (βάλλωμεν χαλεπῶ φάρμακον ἐν πόματι, fr. 178.20 Harder) – a line which also alludes to Odyssean drinking, this time recalling Helen adding a drug of forgetfulness to the drink served up to Menelaus and Telemachus at a banquet in Sparta (*Od.* 4.220). Far from Callimachus having a 'prohibition poetics', for him wine requires dialogue and, not unsurprisingly in the *Aetia*, this leads to Theogenes providing an *aition* for an Ician ritual. Callimachus' πόμα is just as much a source as the stream on Mount Helicon that he arrives at in the first book of the *Aetia* (fr. 2 Harder), the latter of inspiration, the former of information. That Leonides' epigram opens with a 'drink from another spring' reconciles two aspects or, rather, two possibly conflicting readings, of Callimachean inspiration. The use of ἀρύω in the result clause is particularly apt, then, since it denotes both the pouring out of wine and the drawing off of water from a stream (LSJ s.v. ἀρύω). The reader is invited to think that the poetics of the opening epigram, and so the collection, responds to a multitude of Callimachean poses and passages, not only to Antipater's caricature.

Having Callimachus' stream 'in a cup', furthermore, would have resonances in the context of epigram collections. In the same way that the allusion to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* might rework a programmatic end into a programmatic opening, symptomatic imagery could also be exploited programmatically in Hellenistic poetry collections. When it comes to epigram collections, consider a poem by Posidippus from the *Palatine Anthology* which opens *Κεκροπί, ῥαῖνε, λάγυνε, πολὺδροσον ἱκμάδα Βάκχου* ('Sprinkle, Cecropian jug, the dewy moisture of Bacchus', I.1 HE = AP 5.134.1 = 123.1 AB). Posidippus goes on in the following lines to reject the Stoic drinking practices of Zeno and Cleanthes and

⁵⁵ Harder (2002) 212–17, with more in-depth discussion in Hunter (1996) and Harder (2012) II, 971–2.

2.2 Cups and Sources

takes γλυκύπικρος Ἔρως ('bittersweet Eros', 4) as his topic. It thus has a programmatic function. In her study of this epigram, Kathryn Gutzwiller suggests that Posidippus may be the first to compose 'a hymnlike poem addressed to a wine jar'.⁵⁶ Hymns often introduced ancient collections of poems (e.g. Theognis 1–18, Sappho fr. 1), so it is possible that the hymnic aspect marks it as programmatic. Equally, though, Theognis' collection is strongly sympotic in its themes, and hymns were sung at the beginning of symposia: an opening hymn could itself be *sympotically* programmatic.⁵⁷ With the publication of the Milan Posidippus, this proposal can be extended.⁵⁸ The first two (readable) epigrams in the collection's programmatic opening section, restored as Λιθικά (*On Stones*), take as their subject drinking vessels. Epigram 2 AB envisions a κέρασ ('drinking horn', 1) used for pouring libations.⁵⁹ Epigram 3 AB instead considers a ruby engraved with the image of a cup encircled with tendrils. These ekphrastic epigrams' reflection on the preciousness of the materials and the drinking-ware, it has been convincingly proposed, articulate an aesthetic program which runs through the whole collection.⁶⁰ Posidippus introduces the sympotic motif symbolised by a drinking vessel to set out his aesthetic principles in a convivial mode.⁶¹

Leonides' 'cup' continues this strategy of indicating a particular aesthetic approach through a sympotic motif and is equally as programmatic as the allusion to Callimachus' spring. There is a further reason why the cup is an apt image for Leonides to introduce. Leonides elsewhere represents his works as crafted gifts for friends in a dining setting.

⁵⁶ Gutzwiller (1998) 157–8.

⁵⁷ Cf. e.g. Alcman 98 *PMG*; Xenophanes 1.1–17 *IEG*; Aesch. *Ag.* 247; Xen. *Symp.* 2.1; Pl. *Symp.* 176a; Ath. 149c. Meleager acknowledged the programmatic significance of Posidippus 123 AB and placed it at the beginning of his own erotic-sympotic collection. Of course, whether because of its hymnic or sympotic aspects, one cannot say.

⁵⁸ For wide-ranging studies on the new collection see Acosta-Hughes et al. (2004); Gutzwiller (2005); Seidensticker et al. (2015).

⁵⁹ See Kuttner (2005) 147–8. ⁶⁰ Kuttner (2005); Bing (2005).

⁶¹ For the poetics of gems in the *Lithika* see now Elsner (2014), and for the importance of the sympotic resonances see Belloni (2015).

Leonides of Alexandria's Isopsephic Epigrams

τήνδε Λεωνίδεω θαλερὴν πάλι δέρκεο Μοῦσαν,
δίστιχον εὐθίκτου παίγνιον εὐεπίης.
ἔσται δ' ἐν Κρονίοις Μάρκῳ περικαλλὲς ἄθυμα
τοῦτο καὶ ἐν δειπνοῖς καὶ παρὰ μουσοπόλοις.

(Leonides 2 *FGE* = *AP* 6.322)
(Line 1 = 3,360; 2 = 3,440; 3 = 3,108; 4 = 3,108)⁶²

Look again at this sturdy Muse of Leonides, a two-line plaything of clever eloquence. This will be a very fine toy for Marcus at the Saturnalia, both at dinners and among the servants of the Muses.

Pastimes such as isopsephy have a long and apparently distinguished history. They are in some sense a descendent of the games mentioned by Larensius in Athenaeus' *Dinner Sophists*, who on the authority of Clearchus of Soli (fourth century BCE) describes how οἱ παλαιοί ('the ancients'), in contrast to Clearchus' degenerate contemporaries, challenged each other with sympotic games: to recite a verse with a specific number of syllables or letters, or to recall in turn cities in Asia and Europe which began with certain letters (Ath. 10.457c–f = Clearchus fr. 63 Wehrli). While Clearchus describes letter-play as more noble than contemporary habits, for Plutarch the 'putting of names into number symbols' (θέσεις ὀνομάτων ἐν ἀριθμοῖς ὑποσυμβόλοις, *Quaest. conv.* 5.673b) was a game playable even by the 'unlearned' (ἀφιλόλογοι, 673a) after dinner. Setting both Clearchus' and Plutarch's rhetoric of the high-brow and low-brow to one side, it is clear that Leonides specifically invites the reader into the text's games ('look again'), while the image of the cup in the opening line of the epigram which probably inaugurated one of Leonides' collections sets out a context for them as post-prandial play.

2.3 Pebbles in the Stream

The opening words of the second couplet of 33 *FGE* explain (γάρ) what is new about Leonides' epigram, while the subsequent adversative address to Blame – ἀλλὰ σύ, Μῶμε – looks to defend what has immediately preceded. What Leonides must defend in his claim that δίστιχα γὰρ ψήφοισιν ἰσάζεται is that his opening

⁶² Page (1981) 516: 'The problem remains unsolved.' I intend to advance my own solution elsewhere.

2.3 Pebbles in the Stream

Callimachean introduction swiftly turns to a concern for numbers. In this section I explore further how Leonides' imagery and engagement with the *Hymn to Apollo* seek to bridge the perceived gap between refined poetry and numerical accounts: the presence of ψῆφοι in his poems is a rebuttal against a very particular form of biting criticism.

At a critical point for concepts of number and measurement in the Reply to the Telchines, Callimachus addresses the Telchines and attempts another banishing.

ἔλλετε Βασκανίης ὀλοὸν γένος· αὐθι δὲ τέχνηι
κρίνετε,] μὴ σχοῖνωι Περσίδι τὴν σοφίην·

(Callimachus *Aetia* fr. 1.17–18 Harder)

Be off, destructive breed of Bascania, and hereafter judge cleverness by craft, not by the Persian *schoinos*.

Callimachus' injunction addresses two related but distinct aesthetic concepts: the act of measurement and the criterion of measurement. The prohibition against judging by the σχοῖνος Περσίς implies on the one hand that one ought not to approach artworks with the criterion of length in mind. On the other hand, the σχοῖνος Περσίς as the criterion, a land-measurement of many *stadia* in length, could be understood as a rejection of producing and valuing works of *excessive* length: 'do not judge poetry by the kilometre'. In what looks like a purposeful (mis)reading of this latter sense in Callimachus, Leonides announces that what is unique about his poem is its being equal in ψῆφοι, which refers in the first instance to the small stones used for numerical manipulations (LSJ *s.v.* ψῆφος II.1). That is, Leonides still numerically 'measures' his epigrams, but replaces an excessive criterion with a smaller one, a size more apt for the refined aesthetics of Callimachus and the Hellenistic age and which might be thought of as particularly apt for the small, originally stone-bound genre of epigram.

Leonides' epigram also *thematically* reconciles his potentially un-Callimachean enumerating epigrams by invoking the aesthetics of scale observed in Section 1. In Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, a contrast is made between the great torrent of the Euphrates and an undefiled stream: a contrastive aesthetic underscored by Phthonos' preference for large poems which takes up

a single line and Apollo's favouring of smaller works which extends to five. The key feature of the Assyrian river, the symbol of its large size, is that it carries filth (λύματα) and refuse (συρφετός) with it. Leonides, however, appears to respond to a literal parallel between water source and poetry: large rivers carry debris, while streams are clean; large poems carry literary 'rubbish', while small poems are pure. His use of the term ψῆφος ('pebble') to indicate the letters counted as numbers of course has as its common meaning a small pebble or stone (LSJ *s.v.* ψῆφος). On first reading, the epigram upsets the imagery of Callimachus' aesthetics at the end of the *Hymn to Apollo*. The Callimachean 'source' which flows into Leonides' collection has been modified; for (γάρ) his couplets 'are equal in pebbles' or, even, 'these couplets are equal to pebbles'. Either way, Leonides provocatively reworks Callimachus' hydrological metapoetics by taking his cue from Callimachus' source, while quite literally filling his own lines with ψῆφοι, making it a Callimachean spring of a rather different kind: ἐξ ἑτέρης . . . πίδακος. This plays out on the textual level too. Just as it is Leonides who adds pebbles into Callimachus' undefiled spring, it is the announcement of Leonides, his new epigram and its innovation in lines 2–3 which disturbs the flow of Callimachean allusions in lines 1 and 3–4, which appear in the hymn in consecutive lines (112–113).

The water metaphor of Hellenistic – and particularly Callimachean – poetics is well known, but stones too have their place among the aesthetic imagery of the poets and even beside water. In Theocritus' *Idyll 22*, for example, the Dioscuri wander from the rest of the Argonauts and encounter 'a perennial spring, brimming with undefiled water and the pebbles seeming like crystal or like silver' (ἀέναον κρήνην ὑπὸ λισσάδι πέτρῃ | ὕδατι πεπληθυῖαν ἀκηράτω· αἱ δ' ὑπένερθε | λάλλαι κρυστάλλω ἦδ' ἀργύρω ἰνδάλλοντο, 37–9).⁶³ The description of the stream is similar to Callimachus' in that it is pure, and the implication is that this allowed for the λάλλαι ('pebbles'), if that is the correct reading, to be viewed with clarity.⁶⁴ Immediately after this scene

⁶³ The text and translation follow Gow (1952) I, 160–1.

⁶⁴ This is the generally accepted emendation of ἄλλαι. See Gow (1952) II, 389 and Sens (1997) 107.

2.3 Pebbles in the Stream

the Dioscuri meet the boxer Amycus. The description forms a notable contrast.

ἐν δὲ μύες στερεοῖσι βραχίουσιν ἄκρον ὑπὲρ ὤμων
ἔστασαν ἢ ὅτε πέτροι ὀλοῖτροχοι οὕστε κυλίνδων
χειμάρρους ποταμὸς μεγάλας περιέξεσε δίναις

(Theocritus *Idylls* 22.48–50)

Beneath his shoulder points the muscles in his brawny arms stood out like rounded boulders which some winter torrent has rolled and polished in its mighty eddies.

The peaceful stream with its pebbles like crystal is replaced by Amycus, whom they will soon fight, whose monstrous mass is like a boulder polished by a torrent. Theocritus' description is a detailed reworking of Homer's simile of Hector's attack on the Achaean ships (*Il.* 13.137–43).⁶⁵ There Hector's onslaught is likened to a stone pulled loose by a winter storm and carried down to the plain. Similarities can be observed with Callimachus' torrent which carries refuse. Theocritus and Callimachus diverge, however, in that both Theocritus' streams – the one seen by the Dioscuri and the torrent employed in the simile – contain stones. In fact, the boulder smoothed down by the torrent is an equally Hellenistic image of fineness as the smoothed rock at the *locus amoenus* and the pebbles in the stream.⁶⁶

The contrasting aesthetics of stone and water imagery can also be observed in Posidippus' programmatic opening section, the *Lithica*. It too contains in its sequence an arrangement that starts with fine, engraved stones (1–7, 13–15 AB) and even crystal (16 AB) which then moves on to larger rocks (18, 19 AB). Size, too, is a focus for the smaller work 'that measures three spans in circumference' (τρισ[πίθ]αμον περίμετρον, 8.7 AB) as well as for the 'fifty-foot rock' which concludes the section (ἡμι]πλεθροῖην . . . πέτρην, 19.5 AB). In fact, this final stone of the section again alludes to Homer's 'rolling stone' from the *Iliad's* Hector simile

⁶⁵ Sens (1997) 116–17.

⁶⁶ Emphasised by a reuse of λισσός to mean 'smooth rock', which had indicated jagged rocks in earlier poetry, e.g. *Od.* 3.293, 5.412. See Sens (1997) 106.

(ὄλοϊτροχος, *Il.* 13.137; cf. 19.9 AB).⁶⁷ In the case of both the small refined stones and the large fifty-foot rock their movement is connected with water, whether in a rushing river or washed up by the sea.⁶⁸

My point is not that these are necessarily metapoetic images, but that the Hellenistic tradition already advanced a contrastive aesthetic by setting small stones beside larger rocks all in a waterborne context. What I am proposing, then, is that Leonides is drawing on this distinction between the differing aesthetics of stones in a river when alluding to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*; placing small pebbles and not refuse in Callimachus' stream resembles the river content seen in Theocritus *Idyll* 22 and the earlier epigrams from Posidippus' collection. Leonides sets his unique form of poetic 'refinement' (pebbles) within Callimachus' pre-existing image of 'slimline' poetry (stream), and so his epigram doubly emphasises poetic fineness through two mutually reinforcing Hellenistic aesthetic images. Skimming pebbles into Callimachus' stream, Leonides underscores the value of isopsephy. He composes small, refined works which nevertheless contain ψῆφοι and not large stones: isopsephy is another source of refinement.

Leonides can be seen to draw on Hellenistic imagery of water and stones in characterising his poetry, but it is also important to highlight the contemporary reception and critical value of those images. Longinus' *On the Sublime*, a text perhaps contemporary with Leonides, also uses fluvial metaphors to characterise literary output and the nature of the sublime poet.⁶⁹ Significant for the current discussion is that he does so by drawing on the distinction found at the end of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*.

⁶⁷ The Homeric *hapax* to which the stone used by Hector is compared is deployed at 19.9 AB in the form ὄλοϊτροχος. A similar reworking of the simile, however, can be found at 7 AB; see Bing (2005) 125–6. On the poetological significance of measurements in the *Lithika* see Hunter (2004) 97–8 and Fuqua (2007) 281–3.

⁶⁸ Cf. e.g. 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 19, 20 AB. For the import of this water imagery in terms of both the poetics of epigram collections and the geopoetics and geopolitics of Posidippus as a Ptolemaic writer, see Bing (2005) 126–32.

⁶⁹ The text is often placed in the first century CE; see Russell (1964) xxii–xxx and *contra*, Heath (2000).

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ἐνθεν φυσικῶς πῶς ἀγόμενοι μὰ Δί' οὐ τὰ μικρὰ βεῖθρα θαυμάζομεν, εἰ καὶ διαυγῆ καὶ χρήσιμα, ἀλλὰ τὸν Νεῖλον καὶ Ἰστρὸν ἢ Ῥῆνον, πολὺ δ' ἔτι μᾶλλον τὸν Ὠκεανόν.⁷⁰ (Longinus *On the Sublime* 35.4)

So it is that we are led in some natural way, by Zeus, not to wonder at the small streams, even though they are clear and useful, but at the Nile, the Istrus and the Rhine, and much more still, at the Ocean.

The image of Homer as the Ocean from which all poets draw inspiration is a commonplace which arises in the Hellenistic period and is not confined to Callimachus.⁷¹ Longinus nevertheless inverts the contrastive aesthetic of the *Hymn to Apollo*; the great poets are like roaring torrents majestic and sublime, completely eclipsing fine, small rivulets. Nicholas Richardson and Richard Hunter, among others, see this discussion in Longinus as conspicuously avoiding mention of Callimachus.⁷² The language of poetic purity or immaculacy, as has been noted, echoes Callimachus' 'pure' (καθαρή) stream. His rhetorical comparison of poets develops the allusion.

τί δέ; Ἐρατοσθένης ἐν τῇ Ἠριγόνῃ (διὰ πάντων γὰρ ἀμώμητον τὸ ποιημάτιον) Ἀρχιλόχου πολλὰ καὶ ἀνοικνόμετα παρασύροντος ...; (Longinus *On the Sublime* 33.4)

What then? [Is] Eratosthenes [better] in his *Erigone* (in all respects a blameless little poem) than Archilochus surging greatly and disorderly?

Longinus will go on to compare Bacchylides and Pindar, and Ion of Chios and Sophocles. The contrast of Eratosthenes and Archilochus here may have something to do with Archilochus' connection to wine and the *Erigone*'s aetiology for the introduction of wine production into Attica.⁷³ It may also be that Callimachus was too great a figure to challenge and so Longinus

⁷⁰ Greek text following Russell (1964).

⁷¹ See Williams (1978) 98–9 and the detailed discussion of Asper (1997) 109–28, esp. 125–8.

⁷² 'It may be that with his great range of invention, variety of style, and constant ability to take us by surprise, [Callimachus] stands apart from and above the other poets of his period', Richardson (1985) 398. 'More than one modern reader ... has been deafened by the silent absence of the name of Callimachus', Hunter (2011) 230. See also Russell (1989) 306–11.

⁷³ For a further outline of the comparison of Eratosthenes and Archilochus see Hunter (2011) 230–5.

takes on his 'pupil', his 'second in command' (Eratosthenes, as a polymath, was famously named τὸ Βῆτα, 'Mr Beta').⁷⁴ While it has been observed that Archilochus' surging here aligns him with the large torrents (of great poets) as found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* and later on in Longinus, it should also be noted that Eratosthenes' poem provides the second term of comparison in the hymn. Just as Apollo in the hymn champions refined compositions and banishes 'Blame' (Μῶμος), Eratosthenes' poem is small (cf. τὸ ποιημάτιον) and 'blameless' or literally 'does not attract μῶμος/Μῶμος'.

Longinus, then, goes to great lengths to cleave sublime poetry and Homeric verse apart from poetry concerned with minutiae, and he does so by using Callimachus' fluvial imagery against him. Underlying this contrast is the question of how 'accuracy' (ἀκρίβεια) relates to good poetry. He opens his digression on the difference between genius and faultlessness (of which the fluvial comparison forms a part) with a question: is a great poet made by the largest number of virtues, or the greatness of the virtues themselves (33.1)? He proposes in response that 'the greatest natures [of poets] are the least immaculate; for accuracy in everything runs the risk of smallness' (αἱ ὑπερμεγέθεις φύσεις ἥκιστα καθαραί· τὸ γὰρ ἐν παντὶ ἀκριβὲς κίνδυνος μικρότητος, 33.2). He sets sublime poets apart from concerns about accuracy by looking to the Aristotelian conception of it as social pettiness: ἡ ἀκριβολογία μικροπρεπές (*Eth. Nic.* 1122b8). The greatest poets, those who achieve sublimity, are not petty or mean but ignore small faults in the grip of genius. In his later comparison of Demosthenes and Hyperides (34), too, distinguishing between the precise and flawless poet and the sublime poet is the difference

⁷⁴ There is, however, a good contextual argument for choosing Eratosthenes as a term of comparison. Eratosthenes, as well as being known as τὸ Βῆτα ('Runner-up') was also known as Πένταθλος ('Jack of all trades, master of none', *Suda s.v.* Ἐρατοσθένης 2898). In the chapter that intervenes between the comparison of sublime and technically accomplished but mediocre poets, Longinus contrasts the sublime Demosthenes and the accomplished Hyperides: 'he is almost nearly the best in everything like a pentathlete, so that in all contests he loses out to the first-place professionals, but wins among the amateurs' (σχεδὸν ὑπακρος ἐν πᾶσιν ὡς ὁ πένταθλος, ὥστε τῶν μὲν πρωτείων ἐν ἅπασιν τῶν ἄλλων ἀγωνιστῶν λείπεσθαι, πρωτεύειν δὲ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν, 34.1). Eratosthenes serves to introduce a longer criticism of the accomplished, 'pentathletic' orator in light of the sublime orator.

2.3 Pebbles in the Stream

between judging based on ‘counting’ (ἀριθμῶ) and on ‘greatness’ (μεγέθει).⁷⁵ It is not only the water imagery that Longinus inverts: the counting up of poetry at which Callimachus so inveighed is turned against him here. For Longinus, the flawless Hellenistic poet wins only when the counting Telchines are the critics.

Given Leonides’ combining of isopsephy with Callimachus’ poetics, it would be hard to imagine him agreeing with Longinus’ assessment that accuracy is only for second-rate, non-sublime poets, especially when that argument is cloaked in Callimachean imagery. Equally, Leonides does ‘make Callimachus count’, as it were, and sets his themes in compositions that have manifestly focused on numerical accuracy. However, I would tentatively argue that the intertextual advertisement that his ‘Callimachean’ stream contains pebbles proposes a rather different critical judgement regarding his enumerating epigrams. The precedent of pebbles in a stream reaches back further even than Callimachus, to Homer’s simile describing Scamander’s onslaught on Achilles in *Iliad* 21.

ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἀνὴρ ὀχετηγὸς ἀπὸ κρήνης μελανύδρου
ἀμ φυτὰ καὶ κήπους ὕδατι ῥόον ἠγεμονεῦη
χερσὶ μάκελλαν ἔχων, ἀμάρης ἐξ ἔχματα βάλλων·
τοῦ μὲν τε προρέοντος ὑπὸ ψηφίδες ἄπασαι
ὀχλεῦνται· τὸ δέ τ’ ὄκα κατειβόμενον κελαρύζει
χῶρῳ ἔνι προαλεῖ, φθάνει δέ τε καὶ τὸν ἄγοντα·

(Homer *Iliad* 21.257–62)

Just as when a man drawing from a dark water source guides the water in a channel along his plants and orchard, holding in his hand a spade and chucking out from the ditch obstructions. The pebbles are all jostled by the water as it flows forth, and as it quickly flows down, it murmurs in the sloping plot and outruns the man guiding it.

It has often been noted in passing – although, as far as I have been able to investigate, nowhere in print – that Callimachus’ image of the Assyrian river full of refuse is modelled, at a certain remove, on this passage. Immediately before Scamander and Achilles meet

⁷⁵ Russell (1964) *ad loc.* prints τῶ ἀληθεῖ for τῶ μεγέθει, although he knows no parallel and acknowledges that many other editors print τῶ μεγέθει, 159. The emphasis on τὸ μέγεθος in chapters 33 and 35 supports τῶ μεγέθει, as does the lack of the language of truth in the preceding ten chapters.

in battle, Scamander turns to Apollo and warns him to keep out of the fight as he had agreed (*Il.* 21.227–32): a scene reworked in Callimachus with Phthonos' championing those who sing as much as the sea being thoroughly rebutted by Apollo's rejection of big rivers. Here, Leonides' ψῆφος ('pebble') in the stream becomes important. The term λίθος ('stone') appears numerous times in Homer, but this passage is the only use of ψῆφιδος (ψῆφος is not attested at all). It may be that Leonides saw the image in this passage behind Callimachus' stream and so created a window allusion to Homer, a strategy recognisable in Hellenistic and Roman poetry, where an author alludes to another text as well as a third that was a source for that other text.⁷⁶ The Homeric *hapax* ψῆφιδος, at any rate, together with the importance of ψῆφοι for Leonides' poetics more generally, makes it possible that Leonides has the Homeric passage in his sights.

Reading this further intertext into the epigram has an important bearing for understanding Leonides' argument in 33 *FGE*. The *scholia* to the Homeric passage preserve a range of critical responses to Homer's simile. For the late Classical writer Duris of Samos, the evocation of irrigation is too exact and takes the reader away from a sense of the din of battle (*Ge-scholia* on *Il.* 21.257–62 = Duris *FGrH* 76 F 89). An anonymous scholiast replies to Duris with a more charitable reading: 'but he has composed it in this way, since he is good at introducing a new thought into the poem' (ἀλλὰ τοῦτο συνέθηκεν οὕτως, ἀγαθὸς ὢν καινοτομήσαι τὴν ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασι διάνοιαν, *Ge-schol.* *Il.* 21.257–62). In *On Style*, a rhetorical treatise attributed to one Demetrius and usually dated to the second or first century BCE,⁷⁷ the author identifies Homer's simile as a prime example of vividness (ἐναργεῖα). Vividness comes about, he says, 'first from exactness of speech and from omitting and excluding nothing' (πρῶτα μὲν ἐξ ἀκριβολογίας καὶ τοῦ παραλείπειν μηδὲν μηδ' ἐκτέμειν, *On Style* 209). Here, Demetrius makes positive Duris' criticism that it is 'the complete evocation of the water irrigation through the orchard' (<τὸ> τὴν ἐν τοῖς κήποις ὑδραγωγίαν ἐκμιεῖσθαι, Duris

⁷⁶ 'Window reference' after Thomas (1986) 188, or a 'two-tier allusion', Hinds (1987) 56 n.16.

⁷⁷ See Doreen Innes in Halliwell et al. (1995) 312–21.

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FGrH 76 F 89) which takes the reader away from the greatness of the battle scene. He quotes Homer's passage as an example of how vividness can be achieved through the plain style and its focus on the small things: 'We should perhaps keep to subjects which are small . . . the more familiar is always simpler . . . and employ no words which create grandeur' (ἔχοιμεν ἄν καὶ πράγματα ἴσως τινὰ μικρά . . . μικρότερον γὰρ τὸ συνηθέστερον πᾶν . . . μηδ' ὅσα ἄλλα μεγαλοπρέπειαν ποιεῖ, *On Style* 190–1). Demetrius sees in this Homeric stream an example of how the greatest of poets can nevertheless excel in the arena of poetic 'accuracy' (ἀκριβεία): in contradistinction to Longinus' later pronouncement, it demonstrates an ἀκριβολογία ('exactness of speech') appropriate to Homer.

Homer's simile could be seen to enshrine – though not uncontroversially – poetic innovation in accurate descriptions of small subjects and thus also to provide authority for Leonides for placing pebbles in the stream (and read: for combining Callimachus and enumeration). This innovation in poetic accuracy is an important claim that Leonides also makes for his ξεῖνον . . . γράμμα ('novel epigram'). By muddying the waters and placing ψῆφοι in Callimachus' stream, 33 *FGE* justifies Leonides' enumerating epigrams. If one reads the presence of ψῆφοι between the allusions to Callimachus' stream as a reference to the Homeric passage, then Leonides can be observed to collapse the dichotomy of the great river and its rubble in contrast to the pure clean source, an image that Callimachus himself had constructed and which Longinus inherited and inverted in attacking Hellenistic ἀκριβεία. Leonides positions his playful isopsephic epigrams as filled from a Callimachean stream *and* as drawing on a Homeric source. The allusive nature of the ψῆφοι in the epigram notwithstanding, I think it is clear that Leonides is seeking to intervene in a debate about poetic accuracy by mobilising the metapoetic image of the stream so tied to Callimachus. For Longinus accuracy may lead to triviality (μικρότης), but Leonides makes a virtue of it.

* * *

It is evident that Leonides has suffered for not having been included in Philip's *Garland* and for the novelty he sought to

introduce into epigram.⁷⁸ Yet, as I hope to have demonstrated, isopsephy is not treated by Leonides as simply a novel addition to the epigrammatic art but as a practice which must be justified on poetic grounds and defended against criticism. And he legitimises isopsephic epigrams by drawing on the language and themes of his Alexandrian forerunner Callimachus – not to mention responding to earlier epigrammatic receptions of Callimachus – in order to lay out what he sees to be the correspondences between Callimachean poetics and his own counting compositions. He also deftly balances the poetic and the political by addressing poems and introducing their novelty to the Roman imperial family.⁷⁹ Here again Callimachus provides a model.

Crucially, unlike the mainstream of Callimachean reception at Rome which constructed an Alexandrian poet of programmatic refinement and thinness, but quite similar to Catullus and Martial in the previous chapter, Leonides has identified a tension between counting and criticism foregrounded in the Reply to the Telchines. Which is to say, after Callimachus had made explicit the role that counting could – but should not – play in poetic criticism, the issue remained present and alive enough for poets to repeatedly return to the Reply and explicitly develop Callimachus' examination of how poetic content and extent interrelate. Moreover, the poems I have discussed – but especially Catullus' kiss count and Leonides' epigrams – show in different ways just how influential this concern could be for the form of new poems. In seeking to respond to an ongoing debate about counting in relation to criticism, these poets produced works that purposefully and patently straddle the boundary of poetry and counting. Across the centuries following Callimachus' Reply, in short, counting can be seen to influence poetic composition. This poetic world was shaped in part by the world of number.

⁷⁸ Philip had read Leonides, it appears: Gow and Page (1968) II, 328. It looks, though, as if Leonides' epigrams were lifted directly from his own book into a later anthology, but perhaps before Cephalas, see Page (1981) 506.

⁷⁹ Perhaps even as a response to the isopsephic calculation that circulated calling Nero a matricide (Suet. *Nero* 39.2, see above)?