TRAGIC NOISE AND RHETORICAL FRIGIDITY IN LYCOPHRON’S ALEXANDRA*

ABSTRACT
This paper seeks to shed fresh light on the aesthetic and stylistic affiliations of Lycophron’s Alexandra, approaching the poem from two distinct but complementary angles. First, it explores what can be gained by reading Lycophron’s poem against the backdrop of Callimachus’ poetry. It contends that the Alexandra presents a radical and polemical departure from the Alexandrian’s poetic programme, pointedly appropriating key Callimachean images while also countering Callimachus’ apparent dismissal of the ‘noisy’ tragic genre. Previous scholarship has noted links between the openings of the Aetia and of the Alexandra, but this article demonstrates that this relationship is only one part of a larger aesthetic divide between the two poets: by embracing the raucous acoustics of tragedy, Lycophron’s poem offers a self-conscious and agonistic departure from Callimachus’ aesthetic preferences. Second, this article considers another way of conceiving the aesthetics of the poem beyond a Callimachean frame, highlighting how Lycophron pointedly engages with and evokes earlier Aristotelian literary criticism concerning the ‘frigid’ style: the Alexandra constructs its own independent literary history centred around the alleged name of its author, ‘Lycophron’. The article proposes that this traditional attribution is best understood as a pen name that signposts the poem’s stylistic affiliations, aligning it not so much with the Ptolemaic playwright Lycophron of Chalcis but rather with Lycophron the sophist and a larger rhetorical tradition of stylistic frigidity. Ultimately, through these two approaches, the article highlights further aspects of the Alexandra’s aesthetic diversity.

Keywords: aesthetics; Alexandra; Aristotle; Callimachus; frigidity; Lycophron; tragedy; style

In this paper, we seek to shed fresh light on the aesthetic and stylistic affiliations of Lycophron’s Alexandra, a unique poetic creation.1 In 1,474 verses of iambic trimeter, an unnamed Trojan guard relays to King Priam a lengthy prophetic speech by his daughter Cassandra. Framed by the guard’s own programmatic reflections (Alex. 1–30, 1461–74), the reported speech spans vast swathes of history and time, ranging from the Trojan War to the Roman defeat of Macedon in 197 B.C.E. The poem is, in effect, a tragic messenger speech writ large, generically experimental in its combination of drama and epic,

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

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and extremely self-conscious in its manipulation of truth, voice and literary authority. Despite much excellent recent work on the poem, however, it remains remarkably difficult to pin the *Alexandra* down within traditional frameworks of literary interpretation. While some scholars have attempted to situate the poem against Lycophron’s Hellenistic contemporaries, others have turned as far afield as Late European Romanticism in their hunt for a fitting analogue. In this paper, we wish to build on such efforts by approaching the *Alexandra* from two distinct but complementary angles, which will together enhance our understanding of the poem’s protean style.

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

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

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

**THE POETICS OF POST-CALLIMACHEAN TRAGEDY**

Recent scholarship has established a secure connection between Callimachus and Lycophron, based primarily on the latter’s engagement with rare Callimachean vocabulary. But this relationship can be extended further to the sphere of poetics. In particular,

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4 e.g. K.R. Jones, ‘Lycophron’s *Alexandra*, the Romans and Antiochus III’, *JHS* 134 (2014), 41–55; Hornblower (n. 1), 36–9; McNeils and Sens, 10–11. The major rival theories are (i) a third-century dating (e.g. A. Hurst, *Sur Lycophron* [Geneva, 2012], 15–22); (ii) a third-century core with later interpolations (e.g. S.R. West, ‘Lycophron Italicised’, *JHS* 104 [1984], 127–51).
the opening of the *Alexandra* resonates pointedly against Callimachus’ poetic programme (*Alex. 1–15*):

\[ \text{λέξιν τά πάντα νηστεικός, ἃ μ’ ἰστορεῖς, \text{
} \text{άρχης ἀπ’ ἀκρασί, ήν δὲ μηκυνθή λόγος, σύγγνωσθ, δέσποτ’– οὔ γάρ ἥσυχος κόρη \text{
} \text{ἔλυσε χρήσμον ὡς πρῖν αἰώλον σύμω, \text{
} \text{ἀλλ’ ἀσπετον χέρσα παμμιγή βοήν \text{
} \text{διαφινησάγων φοίβαξεν ἐκ λαίμων ὅπα, Σφηνηγός κελαινή γῆρον ἐκμισσωμενήν. \text{
} \text{τόν ἄσσα θημό καὶ διὰ μνήμης ἔχω, κλύως ἄν, ὁνός, κάνανσαμπάξαν φρενί \text{
} \text{πυκνὴ διοίκης διαφάνες αἰνητικάς \text{
} \text{οίμας τυλίσσων, ἂπερ εὐμαθῆς τρίβος \text{
} \text{ὀρθή κελεύθω τὰν σκότο ποδηγεῖτε. \text{
} \text{ἐγώ δ’ ἀκραν βασιλίδα μηρίνθου σχάσας \text{
} \text{ἀνεμι λοξῶν ες δεξίδους ἐπών, \text{
} \text{πρώτην ἀράξας νύσσαν, ὡς πηνῶν δρομεῦς. \text{
} \text{Unerringly shall I tell you everything which you ask me, from the very beginning. But if the account is long, forgive me, master. For the girl did not lose the ever-changing utterance of her oracles quietly as before, but poured forth an immense all-mixed shout, uttering the voice of Phoebus from her bay-chewing throat in imitation of the speech of the dark Sphinx. Listen, my lord, to all of it which I retain in my heart and memory, going back over it with your shrewd mind; traverse and unravel the inexplicable paths of her riddles, where a clear track leads by a straight road through what lies in darkness. As for me, now that I have broken through the starting rope, I advance into the passages of her obscure words, hitting the starting-post like a winged runner. \text{
} \text{This programmatic opening intersects with the famous prologue of Callimachus’ *Aetia* (fr. 1 Harder) on both verbal and thematic levels.\(^6\) To start, we can list the parallels that scholars have previously identified: both prologues are concerned with learning (*ἐὔμαθης, 11 ~ σοφήμ, fr. 1.18), questions of length (μηκυνθή λόγος, 2 ~ [ὡ]λγόστιχος … μεκριν, fr. 1.9–10) and assertions of novelty (οὐ … ὡς πρῖν, 3–4 ~ κελεύθους [ἐτρίπτο]ς, fr. 1.27–8). Both exploit the unusual metaphor of ‘unrolling’ words or paths (τυλίσσων, 11 ~ ἐλ[ίσσω], fr. 1.5).\(^7\) And in both, the speaker likens himself to a winged figure: the messenger to a runner, Callimachus to a cicada (*ἐγὼ δ’ … πηνῶν, 13–15 ~ [ἐγ]’ ὁ δ’ … περόες, fr. 1.32; cf. περόν, fr. 1.39). Most striking of all, however, is Lycophron’s apparent rewriting of Callimachus’ path imagery from the prologue (*Aet. fr. 1.25–8*):

\[ \text{πρός δε σε} καὶ τόδ’ ἅνωγα, τὰ μὴ πατέουσιν ἀμοξαι \text{
} \text{τὰ στείβειν, ἕτερον ἱγνα μὴ καθ’ ὀμία \text{
} \text{διόρον ἐλ[άν μηδ’] οἴμον ἀνὰ πλατών, ἀλλὰ κελεύθους \text{
} \text{ἐτρίπτο]ς, εἰ καὶ στειγοτέρην ἐλάσεις. \text{
} \text{This too I bid you: tread a path which wagons do not trample; do not drive your chariot over the common tracks of others, nor along a wide road, but rather on untrodden paths, even if it means driving a narrower course.} \text{
} \text{7 Cf. A.R. Looijenga, ‘Unrolling the *Alexandra*: the allusive messenger-speech of Lycophron’s prologue and epilogue’, in Cusset and Prioux, 59–80, at 72–3, following Hunt’s supplement.}}\]
Just as Apollo instructs Callimachus to pursue a specific kind of path, so too does the Lycophronic guard instruct Priam to pursue Cassandra’s path of riddles (9–12). We shall consider the significance of this parallel shortly, but for now we should simply acknowledge the sheer abundance of Lycophron’s hodological imagery, which precisely echoes the language of Callimachus’ proem.8

Taken together, this list of parallels suggests a significant relationship between these two passages, especially given their shared introductory and programmatic contexts. Scholars, however, have disagreed about what to make of these connections. Some suppose that they simply reflect independent engagement with broader trends of the literary tradition.9 But in our view this conclusion is too cautious, since it fails to account for the underlying stylistic contrasts at play. Many details of the messenger’s prologue diverge dramatically from the Callimachean course in such a way as to suggest a consistent aesthetic strategy.10 The guard’s promise to tell ‘everything accurately from the very beginning’ (1–2; cf. ἀκτή χρήσις, 30) implies a systematic and sequential narrative akin to the ‘one continuous song’ desired by the Telchines but rejected by Callimachus (ἐν ἄσεσι δηνεκές, Aet. fr. 1.3). His apology to his ‘master’ for speaking at length (2–3) wryly acknowledges his departure from Callimachus’ stated preference for brevity.11 And his recalibration of Callimachus’ path imagery further suggests an aesthetic rebranding: in place of the Callimachean undetached paths of novelty, we are asked to navigate the ‘unutterable’ or ‘inexplicable’ paths of Cassandra’s prophecies (δυσφάτους αἴνιγμάτων | οἴματι, 10–11) to reach ‘what lies in darkness’ (τάν σκότος, 12): a self-referential proclamation of the poem’s obscure and challenging style.12

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

\[\text{λέξω τορώς σοι πάν ὅπερ χρησίμως μαθεῖν, οὐκ ἐμπλέκων αἴνιγματ', ἀλλ' ἀπλῶ λόγῳ}\]

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

In the drama, Prometheus promises to speak plainly to Io, avoiding the αἴνιγματα that characterize Cassandra’s speech (cf. αἴνιγμάτων, 10). Scholars have previously noted how this opening allusion advertises Lycophron’s Aeschylean affiliation, while also defining the Alexander’s style implicitly through contrast: unlike Prometheus’ prophecy,

8 διούχει (10) ~ ἰγνιτα (fr. 1.26); οἴμας (11) ~ οἴμον (fr. 1.27); τρίβος (11) ~ [ἀτρίπτο]ς (fr. 1.28); κελεύθος (12) ~ κελεύθους (fr. 1.27). Cf. Looijenga (n. 7), 74 n. 27. Only Lycophron’s διεξόδους (14) lacks a direct verbal parallel in the Aetia prologue (but see n. 32 below).


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

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

12 The paths of Cassandra’s song may even become labyrinthine: her mouth is αἰώλον (4), a close synonym of δαίδαλος (evoking Daedalus, the creator of the labyrinth); and the guard tells Priam to ‘unravel’ her path (τυλίσσων, a verb used of winding a ball of wool [schol. Od. 6.53]), like Theseus in the labyrinth.)
Cassandra’s (and hence the messenger’s) words are not free from οἰνίγματα, not presented in plain language (ὁλῷον λόγῳ) and not conducted τῷρος (‘clearly’ or ‘smartly’). What has gone unnoticed, however, is the particular resonance of this final adverb. Besides suggesting riddle-free clarity, it evokes a literary trait desired by Callimachus elsewhere. In an epigrammatic fragment, the Alexandrian famously dismissed Antimachus’ Lyde for failing to be τῷρος (Λυδὴ καὶ παχου γράμμα καὶ οὐ τορόν, fr. 398 Pf). It is a stylistic attribute which Callimachus co-opted for his pure and refined aesthetic, opposed to literary παχύτης.

The most significant point of reversal between the two prologues, however, is on the topic of divine inspiration and the sound it produces. Cassandra, just like Callimachus, is inspired directly by Apollo. Lycophron makes this clear at the outset (Cassandra is said to have ‘uttered the voice of Phoebus from her bay-chewing throat’, 6) just as he does at the poem’s close: Cassandra refers to herself as a ‘swallow possessed by Apollo’ (φοιβολητόν ... χελιδόνα, 1460) and the guard calls her a ‘maiden inspired by Phoebus’ (παρθένου φοιβαστρίας, 1468). This Apolline inspiration, however, results in a different form of song from that favoured by the Callimachean Apollo. The Alexandrian god favoured a slender Muse (Μοῦσαν ... λεπταλένη, fr. 1.24), while Callimachus distanced himself from ‘song that makes much noise’ (μέγα ψφορέουσαν ἀοιδήν, fr. 1.19) and the ‘din of donkeys’ ([Θ]όρυβον ... ὄνων, fr. 1.30) in favour of the ‘shril voice of the cicada (λιγήν ἤχον, fr. 1.29). But such cacophony is precisely the kind of sound that emerges from Cassandra’s mouth: framing the statement of her Apolline inspiration (6), we hear that she utters an ‘immense all-mixed shout’ (ἀσπετον ... παμμιγ νομ, 5) and imitates the voice of the dark Sphinx (Σφιγγας κελαινής γῆρον ἐκμυομενή, 7). Alongside the princess’ later association with the Sphinx, Maenads, Sirens, Sibyl and Bacchants (1461–6), this suggests a different kind of acoustic from that favoured by Callimachus’ Apollo.

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

οὺς Τρώων ἀλαλητός ἑκά στρατόν εὐρύν ὀρῶν·
όυ γὰρ πάντων ἤν όμος θρόος οὐδ’ ἵνα γῆρυς,
ἀλλὰ γλῶσσα ἐμέμικτο, πολύκλητοι δ’ ἔσαν ἄνδρες.

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

Through this reuse of a Homeric rarity, Cassandra is aligned with foreign, alien sounds, which are distinctively noisy and cacophonous (ἀλαλητός, θρόος)—appropriately so for a Trojan princess. The same could also be said of δυσφάτους (10), a word which appears only once previously in the literary tradition, again of Cassandra’s prophecies, in Aeschylus’ description of the princess’ ‘inexplicable din’ (δυσφάτῳ κλαγγᾷ, *Ag.* 1152). Through this dense network of sonic allusions, Lycophron establishes a sense of jumbled disorder and acoustic chaos. The *Alexandra* sets itself up as sonically antithetical to Callimachus’ preferences in the *Aetia* prologue.

Such an acoustic aesthetic is reinforced at the end of the poem when Cassandra asks herself why she is ‘barking at length’ to the deaf elements of nature (μακρά … βούζω, 1451–3) and ‘twanging’ the ‘empty noise’ of her mouth (κενὸν ψάλλουσα μάστακος κρότων, 1453). Lycophron again presents his work as the embodiment of discordant non-Greek sound: the verb βούζω dehumanizes Cassandra, associating her with the barking of beasts, while her lengthy speech aligns her with the kind of poetry that Callimachus rejects in the *Aetia* prologue (μακρά, 1451 ~ μακρὴν, fr. 1.10). Particularly revealing, however, is the rare verb ψάλλουσα, usually used of plucking a bow- or lyre-string and thus ripe for metapoetic interpretation: as elsewhere in the poem, Cassandra’s identity blurs with that of the guard and poet, presenting the whole poem as a cacophony of ‘empty noise’ (κενὸν … κρότων).

In addition, Cassandra’s closing words here evoke the Aesopic fable of the hedonistic cicada and the hard-working ant, a tale which similarly stresses the futile din of song. While the ant secured hibernal provisions by working throughout the summer, the cicada spent all its time singing, was destitute when winter arrived, and received no sympathy or support from the industrious ant. The moral, it seems, is that there is

PMG (suppl. Diehl). Contrast Callimachus’ association of his enemies with the Massagetae, the Persians and the Medes (fr. 1.15–16, 18).


20 Cf. an epigram by Leonidas of Tarentum, where the same verb is used of the once noisy iambographer Hipponax (βούζως, 58.3 Gow–Page = *Anth. Pal.* 7.408.3), who is now quiet in death (ἄρπα … ἐν ἴσσῳ, 58.4); the situation is reversed in the *Alexandra* for the girl who speaks ‘not quietly as before’ (οὕ γὰρ ἴσσος … ὦς πρίν, 3–4).
an appropriate time for both work and play; industry is ultimately rewarded. This fable reaches us from antiquity in numerous forms, suggesting its enduring popularity. But in one particular version, recounted by the *rhetor anonymus Brancatianus*, we read that ‘the twanging cicada’s labour proved empty’ (τῷ ψάλλοντι δὲ τέτηγι κενεός ἣν ὁ πόνος) and that the ant, rather than offering any help, told its suffering peer to keep on ‘dancing and making noise’ (ψάλλοντι … κενός … κρότει). It is striking how closely Lycophron’s Cassandra echoes the verbal core of this fable: she ‘twangs empty noise’ (κενεόν ψάλλουσα … κρότον), just as the Aesopic cicada ‘twangs’ and ‘makes noise’ to no avail (ψάλλοντι … κενός … κρότει). For an audience familiar with this fable, Cassandra aligns herself with the cicada. The insect proves an apt parallel for both the nature and the consequences of her song: both singers produce an unwelcome, cacophonous din (expressed through the onomatopoeic sibilance of ψάλλοντι and the hard consonants of κρότος κροτέω) and both are examples of the limits and failings of singing: the cicada’s music fails to secure any sustenance, while Cassandra’s prophecy fails to persuade its audience (Alex. 1454–7). By alluding to this fable, Lycophron reinforces the distinctive aesthetic of his poem: it is not only a discordant racket but also an account of a prophecy that is destined to fall on deaf ears.

Here too, however, Lycophron appears to be positioning himself squarely against Callimachus. Given the contents of this fable, the allusion invites a polemical revaluation of the cicada from the *Aetia* prologue. The animal stood there as a symbol of pure, refined sound in comparison to the braying of donkeys (fr. 1.29–32), but Lycophron introduces another tradition in which the insect was a noisy nuisance: the cicada’s κρότος proves uncomfortably close to asinine θόρυβος—a far cry from the λιγός ἤχος celebrated by Callimachus. Lycophron thus undermines Callimachean tradition by re-appropriating its strategies: as scholars have long recognized, the fable tradition is a significant element underlying Callimachus’ programmatics, especially his contrast between the donkey and the cicada (cf. 184 Perry). But whereas Callimachus aligned himself with the cicada as an emblem of delicate song, Lycophron’s Cassandra adopts the same bestial mascot for different ends: it has become a symbol of disruptive discord. By echoing and inverting Callimachus’ programmatic


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


26 The description of Dawn leaving her husband (*Τιθωνὸν … | λιγότης*, 18–19) may also allude to the Callimachean cicada, recalling Tithonus’ famous metamorphosis into that insect after being abandoned by Dawn in his old age. Yet here too Lycophron perverts the motif: this future cicada is denied ‘wings’ (contrast περιοὺς, *Aet.* 1.32), which instead belong to the ‘winged runner’ of the guard’s simile (πτηνὸς 15) and Dawn’s ‘winged’ steed, Pegasus (περιοῖς 17). Lycophron robs Callimachus’ metapoetic emblem of one of its key attributes, winged lightness.
proclamations, Lycophron thus carves out his own distinctive and alternative aesthetic, centred on raucous noise: an apt metaphor for the linguistically obscure Alexandras. At both the outset and the close of his poem, Lycophron positions himself agonistically against Callimachus’ programmatic preferences.

Lycophron’s aesthetic relationship with Callimachus is not restricted to the Aetia prologue, however. The guard’s programmatic language can also be interpreted on a wider level as a response to Callimachus’ more general criticisms of tragedy. At various points in his work (especially the Iambi and the epigrams), Callimachus appears to disparage tragedy as an art form. In one epigram, he pictures a Dionysian mask yawning at the tedious repetition of popular tragic lines (Epigr. 48 Pf. = 26 Gow–Page = Anth. Pal. 6.310—verse 6 quotes Eur. Bacch. 494). In an unplaced fragment of the Iambi, an unknown speaker claims that ‘the tragic actor did not rouse us yesterday’—an unfavourable assessment of the genre’s emotional potential (οὐ πρόν μὲν ἡμῖν ὁ πραγματάτης ἠγείρε, fr. 219 Pf.). And in another epigram he depicts a first-person speaker’s account of tragic failure (Epigr. 59 Pf. = Gow–Page = Anth. Pal. 11.362); as Gow and Page conclude, ‘the way to lose your friends is to write drama’. It is difficult to draw a coherent aesthetic from such contextless snippets, but even so the cumulative impression is that Callimachus scorned tragedy as a literary form. And from other poems it seems that this dislike was particularly rooted in the raucous noise and popular appeal of tragedy: in another unplaced fragment of the Iambi, we find a reference to ‘some bellowing, tragic Muse’ (ἡτὶς πραγματάτης μοῦσα ληκυθίζουσα, fr. 215 Pf.), associating the sound of tragedy with somebody speaking into a lekythos. Most revealing, however, is Callimachus’ assertion in Iambus 2 that tragedians ‘have the voice of those who inhabit the sea’ (οἱ δὲ πραγματάτης τῶν θάλασσαν οἰκεῖον ὄντων | ἔχον, fr. 192.12–13 Pf.). The meaning of this phrase has been disputed: some take it to refer to the muteness of fish, but a range of parallels and the larger context clearly favour a reference to their allegedly harsh and unmusical sound. For Callimachus, tragedians match non-human fish in their inarticulate and grating noises, a foil to his own refined poetics. Lycophron, by contrast, champions the din of tragedy and embraces it as his modus operandi.

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

Segue the speech of the Sphere of the sphere, and the one
of the sea, his voice, his mouth,
and the voice of those who live in the sea: Empedocles and Callimachus
the voice of those who live in the sea: Empedocles and Callimachus

29 The image recalls Aristophanes’ famous phrase λῆκυθιόν ἀπώλεσεν (Ran. 1200–48; cf. Hor. Epist. 1.3.14). See too Thomas (n. 27), 189–90 for the verb’s further possible association with triviality.
Theaetetus travelled a pure path. If this road does not lead to your ivy wreath, Bacchus, heralds will proclaim the names of others for a short while, but Hellas will proclaim his wisdom forever.

In this epigram Callimachus acknowledges the popular appeal of Dionysiac art (here not only tragedy but also dithyramb), marked by the ivy-clad road of its divine patron (Βάκχε)—it belongs to the domain of public heralds (χίρυκες). For all this appeal, however, the renown it bestows remains short-lived. Theaetetus, by contrast, will endure in memory by following a different ‘pure path’, not frequently trodden by the masses. The programmatic nature of this epigram is reinforced by its clear links with the Aetia prologue, not only in its concern for wisdom (σοφίην, v. 4 ~ σοφίην, Aet. fr. 1.18, both in the same sedes) but also in its assertion of the right kind of road to travel: the pure path (κοθηρήν ὁδόν) matches the prologue’s undefiled and untrodden route (fr. 1.25–8). The dismissal of Dionysus, moreover, parallels the prologue’s dismissal of the din of donkeys (fr. 1.30–2), an animal which was intimately connected with the god.31 This epigram thus complements the programmatic polemic of the Aetia prologue, directing it specifically against the popular art of Dionysus. Indeed, reading both Callimachean texts together, we can gain a clear sense of an opposition between Callimachus’ pure and exclusive Apollo and the common and defiled Dionysus.

Here too we can see Lycophron’s prologue positioning itself against such polemic. The Callimachian reference to χίρυκες might make us think of the context of the Alexandra, spoken by an unnamed herald, while the Alexandra’s tangled hodological imagery contrasts strongly with the Callimachian ‘pure path’.32 Most significantly, however, Lycophron does not distance himself from Dionysus, as Callimachus had: instead, Cassandra speaks from a programmatically ‘Bacchic mouth’ (ἡ δ’ ἐνθεον σχόσσασα βοσχείον στόμα, 28). Whereas Callimachus had opposed the Dionysiac in his epigram and favoured the Apolline in the Aetia prologue, Lycophron collapses the opposition between these two gods, embracing the influence of both: the prologue begins with Apollo (6) and closes with Dionysus (28).33 The Alexandra, therefore, self-consciously unravels Callimachus’ polarized poetics: it embodies both Bacchus and Apollo, both Dionysiac noise and Apolline inspiration.34 Through repeated engagement with Callimachean texts together, we can gain a clear sense of an opposition between Callimachus’ ‘pure’ and exclusive Apollo and the common and defiled Dionysus.

31 Cf. Ambühl (n. 25), 211–12.
32 The epigram’s ὁδόν provides a parallel to Lycophron’s διεξόδον (14)—the only road image in the Alexandra prologue which does not find a lexical equivalent in the Aetia prologue. Moreover, the Lycophronic path requires a ἐνθεον σχόσσασα βοσχείον στόμα, 28), whereas Callimachus had opposed the Dionysiac in his epigram and favoured the Apolline in the Aetia prologue, Lycophron collapses the opposition between these two gods, embracing the influence of both: the prologue begins with Apollo (6) and closes with Dionysus (28).33
A PRESCRIBED AESTHETIC: ‘LYCOPHRON’ AND RHETORICAL FRIGIDITY

However, the *Alexandra* should not—and cannot—be viewed purely through a Callimachean lens. Such a framework is overly restrictive and prevents us from seeing many other aspects of Lycophron’s work. As we have noted above, the poem can be—and has indeed been—subjected to other aesthetic interpretations through completely different frames of reference, such as Sistakou’s analogy of Late European Romanticism. In the second half of this article, we wish to take the poem in yet another direction, by exploring how it constructs an alternative literary historical framework beyond Callimachus, drawing especially on the earlier literary criticism of Aristotle. The key to this interpretation lies in the name of the poem’s author, ‘Lycophron’.

As is well known, names and naming play a major part in the obscure and riddling style of the *Alexandra*. Rarely does Lycophron name a person, place or god directly: instead, he intimates identities through a range of epithets, metaphors, analogies, style of the — beyond Callimachus, drawing especially on the earlier literary criticism of Aristotle. In the second half of this article, we wish to take the poem in yet another direction, by exploring how it constructs an alternative literary historical framework — exploring how it constructs an alternative literary historical framework beyond Callimachus, drawing especially on the earlier literary criticism of Aristotle. The key to this interpretation lies in the name of the poem’s author, ‘Lycophron’.

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One name that has received far less attention in modern scholarship, however, is that of the poet of the poem: *Lykophron*. Traditionally, this name has been understood to refer to Lycophron of Chalcis, the Ptolemaic playwright and scholar. However, such an attribution was already doubted in the scholia to the *Alexandra* (τι ονομάζεται ἀδημοσίως Λυκόφρον; τιμίως τάς τραγῳδίας, schol. *Alex.* 1226, page 226.5–6). With good reason: most ancient sources merely ascribe the poem to an unspecified ‘Lycophron’, and it is only a handful


of late testimonia (Tzetzes and the Suda) that directly identify this figure with the Ptolemaic poet.\(^{39}\) In any case, the ascription to the Chalcidian is impossible to maintain if the poem dates from the start of the second century B.C.E., as we believe.\(^{40}\) It should thus be viewed with considerable scepticism. Most previous scholars who have accepted the later dating of the poem conclude that we can know nothing more about its actual author, and that the Alexandra, like many other works in antiquity, is simply pseudonymous: it may or may not have been composed by some unknown ‘Lycophron’.\(^{41}\) In this contribution, however, we would like to propose an alternative solution to this problem of authorial identity, one which simultaneously enriches our appreciation of the poem’s aesthetic positioning.

We propose that the transmitted ascription to ‘Lycophron’ is in fact a pen name adopted by the poem’s original author to embody and advertise his stylistic affiliation. It does not primarily associate the Alexandra with the famous Alexandrian playwright, an association which presumably only developed later (as the general lack of specificity in our earlier testimonia may suggest): given the Chalcidian’s reputation for tragedy, scholarship and wordplay, he was a plausible candidate for anybody who wanted to attach a concrete personality to the poem.\(^{42}\) Instead, we propose that the author of the poem pseudonymously adopted the name ‘Lycophron’ to evoke an earlier literary namesake from the Classical period: Lycophron the sophist (83 DK = 38 Laks–Most). Little is known of this figure today. An allusion in a pseudo-Platonic letter suggests that he may have resided at the court of Dionysius II in Sicily during the early fourth century B.C.E.\(^{39}\) In any case, the ascription to the Chalcidian is impossible to maintain if the poem dates from the start of the second century B.C.E., as we believe.\(^{40}\) It should thus be viewed with considerable scepticism. Most previous scholars who have accepted the later dating of the poem conclude that we can know nothing more about its actual author, and that the Alexandra, like many other works in antiquity, is simply pseudonymous: it may or may not have been composed by some unknown ‘Lycophron’.\(^{41}\)


\(^{39}\) Ο Λυκόφρων οὔσι τῷ μὲν γένεται Χαλκιδεύς (Tzetz. Alex. page 4.25 Scheer; cf. Tzetz. Alex. 817, page 257.10 Scheer); Λυκόφρων, Χαλκιδεύς ἀπὸ Εὐβοίας … ἔγραψε καὶ τὴν καλουμένην Ἀλεξάνδραν, τὸ σκοτεινὸν ποίημα (Suda s.v. λ 827 Adler). The ascription in the Suda is appended to the end of Lycophron’s entry after a list of his tragedies—almost as an afterthought. Other testimonia are prosopographically imprecise: e.g. latebrasque Lycophonis atri (Stat. Silv. 5.3.157); ἡ τοῦ Λυκόφρωνος Αλεξάνδρα (Lucian, Lexiphanes 25); παρὰ Λυκόφρονι ἐν τῇ Αλεξάνδρᾳ (Artem. 4.63). For a survey of testimonia, see A. Berra, ‘Obscuritas lykophronea: les témoignages anciens sur Lycophron’, in Cusset and Prioux, 259–318, at 271–314.

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

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

\(^{42}\) The Chalcidian was a member of the Ptolemaic Pleiad of tragedians (100 TrGF; A. Kotlińska-Toma, Hellenistic Tragedy [London, 2015], 74–90), wrote a treatise on comedy in at least nine books (περὶ κωμωδίας; cf. Ath. Deipn. 11.485d) and was famous for his anagrams (ἰὸν Ἱρακλῆς ἄρσιν, ἀπὸ μέλλωντος τοῦ Πολιομαίω; cf. Tzetz. Alex., page 5.6–7 Scheer = SH 531).

elenchi (174b), we hear that the sophist was a refined rhetorician, skilfully able to rebrand a topic about which he had little material, as when he was asked to praise a lyre. According to the gloss of Alexander of Aphrodisias, he praised the lyre for only a short while, before turning to the eponymous constellation, ‘Lyra’, a topic on which he was far better equipped.44 Judging by this anecdote, he was evidently well attuned to the polysemous potential of language.

Most significantly for us, however, he is also cited in Aristotle’s Rhetoric as a prime example of rhetorical frigidity, the locus classicus for ancient discussions of stylistic ψυχρότης (Rh. 1405b35–1407a18).45 Aristotle specifies four elements of speech which contribute to such frigidity: the use of compound words (τοῖς διπλοῖς ὀνόμασιν), obsolete or unusual words (γλώτταις), epithets that are overly long, unseasonable or too crowded (τοῖς ἐπιθέτοις τῇ ἣ μακροῖς ἢ ἕκκληροῖς ἢ πυκνοῖς χρήσθαι), and metaphors (μεταφοράς). To exemplify these stylistic flaws, he draws illustrations from three sophists: Gorgias, Alcidamas and—crucially—Lycophron, whose work provides examples of the first two categories (Rh. 1405b35–1406a10):

tὰ δὲ ψυχρά ἐν τέταρτῳ γίγνεται κατὰ τὴν λέξιν, ἐν ταῖς διπλαῖς ὀνόμασιν, όσοι Λυκόφρον ὁν τοῦ ποιητοῦ ὀφανῶν τὶς μεγαλοκορύφῳ γῆς, καὶ ἁκίνη τὸ δε στενοπόρον, καὶ ὡς Γοργίας ἁκίνητας περιχομοσκολόκος ἐπιορκήσαντας καὶ κατευορκήσαντας, καὶ ὡς Αλκιδάμας μένους μὲν τῇ ψυχῇ πληροφορίαν, πυρίχρον ὅ τὴν ὄνοι γνημονεύνη, καὶ τελεφόρον ὦμηθη τὴν προθυμίαν αὐτῶν γενήσεσθαι, καὶ τελεφόρον τὴν πειθόν τῶν λόγων κατέστησαν, καὶ κυνόλοχον τὸ τῆς θεᾶς τῆς ἕδαρας· πάντα ταῦτα γὰρ ποιητικὰ δία τὴν δίπλωσιν φαίνεται.

μιὰ μὲν όνοι σύνη σύνη, μία δὲ τὸ χρήσθαι γλωττάς, όσοι Λυκόφρον ξέρξην πέλαρον ἄνδρα, καὶ Σκύρων σύνυς ἄνδρα, καὶ Αλκιδάμας ἁθυμα τῇ ποιήσαι, καὶ τήν τῇ ψύξεως ἀπαθαλιάς, καὶ ἀκράτω τῆς διανοιας ὀργή τεθημενὸν.

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

So this is one cause of frigidity. Another is the use of rare words, such as Lycoφron’s description of Xerxes as ‘a gargantuan man’ and of Sciron as ‘a scourge of a man’; Alcidamas too has ‘bibleots for poetry’, ‘the effrontery of nature’, and ‘whetted by his mind’s unadulterated ire’.

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

44 Alex. Aphr. on Arist. Soph. el. 15.174b30, CAG II.3, 118.31–119.3. However, this gloss may simply be Alexander’s own hypothesis: Laks and Most (n. 43), 9.120, 9.129 n. 1.

From this literary background, the ascription of the *Alexandra* to a ‘Lycophron’ gains considerable point: Aristotle’s four stylistic traits of rhetorical ‘frigidity’ map perfectly onto core aspects of the poem’s design. It too is characterized by elaborate compound words, many of which are hapax or proton legomena, such as λυκαινομόρφων (‘wolf-transforming’, 481) and κραστοθιρός (‘brain-eating’, 1066). It is replete with a wide range of γλώττων, including foreign borrowings (for example the Egyptian βάρν, 747) and rarities of the literary tradition (for example παθομόσσοντος, 622; cf. *Od.* 13.106). It contains numerous strings of lengthy and elaborate epithets, especially in reference to the gods (for example Athena: Τριγεννήτος θεά | Βοσρώ Λογγάττες Ὀμολογίς Βίς, 519–20). And it frequently mentions heroes and places through the obscuring veil of metaphor (such as the sequence of birds and fish used to characterize Cassandra’s assailant, Locrian Ajax). In the past, scholars have considered many possible predecessors for these stylistic elements, including Aeschylean tragedy, dithyrambic New Music and oracular literature. But alongside these various influences we should now set the ‘frigid’ style of classical rhetoric. The *Alexandra* epitomizes all four of Aristotle’s defining criteria for this aesthetic, pushing them to their extremes. Aristotle comments that these stylistic features verge on the poetic when used in excess (άλλ’ ἀν πολύ, πάντως ποιητικόν, *Rh.* 1406b1; ποιητικῶς γύρο ἄγαν, 1406b10–11); but by taking them to an even greater extreme, the *Alexandra* has become hyper-frigid and hyper-poetic, near impenetrable in its language. What for Aristotle was a stylistic flaw (‘frigidity’) has here become the poem’s key compositional strategy. In its ascription to ‘Lycophron’, we suggest that the poem self-consciously acknowledges this rhetorical precedent, situating itself within the same ‘frigid’ tradition as the classical sophist. In looking back to Aristotle’s criticisms, the poem embodies and positively reappraises rhetorical frigidity: the ascription serves as a pen name, marking the poem’s aesthetic affiliation.

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

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


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

50 Ajax is pictured as a vulture (τόργος, 357–8), kingfisher (κηρύλον, 387), seabream (φέτρον, 388), cuckoo (κόκκυνα, 395) and dolphin (δελφίνος, 397). Lambin (n. 35), 233–60 provides a useful catalogue of metaphors in the *Alexandra*, with further discussion.


52 These categories of influence are not completely separate: Aristotle himself associated noisy (ψουφός) dithyrambists with the ‘frigid’ style through their use of compound words (*Rh.* 1406b1–2; cf. Demetr. *Eloc.* 116). In the following paragraphs, however, we consider the *Alexandra’s* broader associations with stylistic frigidity and the sophistic Lycophron in particular.
Such an argument is bolstered by the widespread use of pen names and artistic aliases in antiquity. As Aristotle recognized, however, the noun only in the manuscripts of Aeschylus here used in apposition) was an extremely rare poeticism: it is previously attested. As Aristotle recognized, however, the noun only in the manuscripts of Aeschylus here used in apposition) was an extremely rare poeticism: it is previously attested.

In its bulky, figurative and foreignizing language, the poem simply ‘does what it says on the tin’. It fulfills the literary expectations raised by the poem’s alleged authorship.

Besides this general stylistic continuity, the two Aristotelian quotations concerning γλασταί exhibit further significant parallels with the work of our Hellenistic Lycophron. First, the description of Sciron involves onomastic wordplay which mirrors that which we later find in the Alexandra. In myth, Sciron was one of the notorious bandits that ranged the Attic countryside, forcing travellers to wash his feet before kicking them into the sea: his designation as a ‘scourge of a man’ (σίνις ἀνήρ) is thus extremely appropriate. As Aristotle recognized, however, the noun σίνις (‘scourge’/ ‘ravager’, here used in apposition) was an extremely rare poeticism: it is previously attested only in the manuscripts of Aeschylus’ Agamemnon (λέοντα σίνιν, Ag. 717–18) and in a verse attributed to Sophocles’ Thamyris (Αὐτόλυκον, πολέων κτεῶν σίνιν

53 On allusive names and aliases in the Hellenistic period, see J.H. Klooster, Poetry as Window and Mirror: Positioning the Poet in Hellenistic Poetry (Leiden, 2011), 188–94.
57 For other criticisms of γνωρίσει, see [Longinus], Subl. 4; Demetr. Eloc. 114–27.
58 A sceptical reader might object that ‘Lycophron’ is too common a name to bear such a precise and allusive significance (see the various entries in the LGPN [Oxford, 1987–], including e.g. forty Lycophrons from Attica in volume 2). However, the sophist’s reputation (through Aristotle) as a literary personality would have strengthened the link, and the erudition required to decode the pen name is no different to that demanded by the rest of the poem.
59 Sciron: Apollod. Epit. 1.2–3; Diod. Sic. 4.59.4; Hyg. Fab. 38; Paus. 1.144.8; Plut. Thes. 10.1. The myth seems to have been popular among Hellenistic poets, e.g. Callim. Hecele frs. 59–60 Hollis; Euphorion, fr. 11.6–9 Lightfoot.
60 Most modern editors of Aeschylus accept Conington’s conjecture (λέοντας ἵνν), but the Hellenistic pedigree of the manuscript reading seems to be confirmed by several alliances: λέοντας… σίνιν, Callim. Hymn 2.91–2; σίνιν, Lycoph. Alex. 539 (of Paris, as perhaps in Aeschylus); cf. too σίνις, Anyte 11.3 Gow–Page = Anth. Pal. 7.202.3. Cf. F. Williams, Callimachus: Hymn to Apollo. A Commentary (Oxford, 1978), 79.
More commonly, the word served as a proper noun, referring to another mythical Attic bandit, Sinis, who—like Sciron—preyed on unwar
wayfarers, catapulting them into the sky from a bent pine tree. By using the rare word to describe Sciron, the sophistic Lycophron thus collapsed the two mythical figures into a single reference, emphasizing their similarity. After all, both bandits were punished by Theseus with a taste of their own medicine—Sciron hurled into the sea, and Sinis into the air. They are mythical doubles of each other, a point which Lycophron’s phrasing implicitly acknowledges. Such a condensed allusion gives us a taste of the sophist’s mythical mastery and allusive sophistication. Crucially for our purposes, however, this onomastic blurring is also a familiar feature of Lycophron’s Alexandra, in which characters are often figuratively described through the names of others, as when Agamemnon is presented as Zeus (1124–5, 1369–71) and Zeus in turn as Agamemnon (335); they too are doublets of each other, one ruling on earth, the other in heaven. In already transferring names and blurring identities centuries earlier, the sophistic Lycophron provides significant precedent for the indirect and allusive onomastics of the Alexandra.

Most striking of all, however, is the sophistic Lycophron’s description of Xerxes as a gigantic figure, a ‘gargantuan man’ (πέλορον ὄνδρα, Arist. Rh. 1406a7–8). The Persian tyrant is described in a similar manner in the Alexandra itself (Alex. 1413–16):

\[\text{αὐλλ’ ἀντί πάντων Περσέως ἔνα σποράς στελεί γίγαντα, τῷ θάλασσα μὲν βατή πεξῷ ποτ’ ἐστα, γη δὲ ναυσθλωθήσεται ρήσουντι πηδοῖς χέρσον.}\]

But in return for everything she [sc. Asia] will send forth a single giant from the race of Perseus, who will one day walk over the sea on foot, and sail over the earth, breaking open the dry land with oars.

In the work of both Lycophrons, Xerxes was a gigantic, more-than-human figure. Like σινις, πέλορος is a rare poeticism but here of epic rather than tragic pedigree. In archaic and classical epic, it was regularly used of monsters and giants, to which Xerxes is thus equated. Admittedly, our absence of the wider context for the sophist’s statement makes broader conclusions difficult, and it is possible that both authors were simply drawing independently on a wider analogical tradition of using the Gigantomachy to

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

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

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

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

65 The adjective is used of Gaia (Hes. Theog. 159, 173, etc.), Echidna (Theog. 295, 299), Typhoeus (Theog. 845, 856), Polyphemus (Od. 9.257), Gorgons (Il. 7.541, Od. 11.634, etc.) and dangerous animals, including the Nemean lion (Panyassis, fr. 5 Bernabé) and snakes (Il. 12.220). The only earlier non-epic appearances are Thgn. 9 (again of Gaia) and Pind. fr. 70db.8 S.–M. (extremely fragmentary).
articulate cultural and political oppositions. But the resemblance is certainly striking and suggests that Aristotle’s sophist may have been a model for the poet of the Alexandria in more than just style alone.

We therefore propose that the original poet of the Alexandria adopted ‘Lycophron’ as a pen name, aligning the poem with a predetermined ‘frigid’ literary aesthetic. We are not, of course, the first to mention these namesakes in the same breath: already in antiquity, an anonymous commentator on Aristotle attempted to clarify this passage of the Rhetoric by remarking that it refers to ‘another Lycophron and not the poet’ (Λυκόφρων ὁ ἄλλος καὶ ὁ ποιητής). Rather than drawing such a sharp distinction between the two, however, we believe that it is better to see the poet of the Alexandria building on the reputation and the stylistic associations of his predecessor. The poem’s ascription advertises its aesthetic credentials. Moreover, if scholars are right to situate the poet of the Alexandria in a South Italian context and to locate the sophistic Lykophrön within the Sicilian school of rhetoric headed by Gorgias, we might even see some local pride in this implicit affiliation: both ‘Lycophrons’ would then be situated within the same geographical environment, and the poet of the Alexandria would be establishing his literary identity through specifically local precedent. Admittedly, such geographical overlap can be no more than speculation on current evidence, and it is worth acknowledging how little we in fact know of the sophist beyond Aristotle’s citations. But in some respects the obscure identity of this earlier author is a perfect complement to the obscure style of the Alexandria itself. The poet’s name is the ultimate ‘name-code’ throughout the whole poem, embodying its stylistic frigidity. However much the Alexandria plays against Callimachus’ poetic programme, therefore, it must also be situated within a far broader literary history—and its deep affiliation with rhetorical frigidity demonstrates a further strand of its aesthetic range.

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