CHAPTER 1

Writing the Beginnings of Greek Literary History

Henry Spelman

1.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the nature and development of Greek literary history before Aristotle, a generally acknowledged watershed. Indeed, modern histories of ancient literary history often begin with Aristotle or, less frequently, with Plato. As with any sort of historiography, the choice of a starting point is neither a neutral nor an objective matter: locating the beginning of the story in time already contributes to shaping its plot, content, and meaning.[1]

I instead begin with our cover image, the tondo of an Attic red figure cup from around 430 BC that features the mythical poets Linos and Musaeus, both labelled with inscriptions.[2] The older Linos is seated reading a scroll while the younger Musaeus stands holding his writing tablet. In the background to the left is a chest (*kibōtos*), a common household item that could be used to store a collection of texts. The most striking thing about this image is its implied literary history: mythological poets from successive generations are brought face to face. Both are depicted with materials for writing and reading, and it seems that the aged Linos is teaching the young Musaeus much as teachers taught their pupils in fifth-century Athens. Indeed, Immerwahr (1964: 20) describes this image as 'a school scene cloaked in mythical garb'.[3] One is reminded of a common, and commonly untrustworthy, trope of ancient biography: 'younger poet X was the pupil of older poet Y'.[4]

[1] On 'emplotment' see White 1973.

[2] *ARV*[2] 1254.80; *Addenda*[2] 355; Beazley archive #217018. The difficult writing on the scroll has been variously read; θεῦν (= θεῶν, 'of the gods'), if correct, would suggest the theological concerns of poetry later attributed to Musaeus and Linos.

[3] The exterior of the cup shows another aspect of ancient education: athletes with a trainer. But Robin Osborne points out to me that this is a somewhat strange scene of literate education: normally the younger figure sings or performs; here Musaeus holds a tablet. For partial parallels see Beazley archive #321, #205092, and #215997.

[4] Fairweather 1974: 262–3, Lefkowitz 2012: 3 *et passim*.

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Though the trope of explaining intellectual filiation through close personal relationships is clearly older, the historically contingent paradigm of the student-pupil relationship is first attested in literary sources, to my knowledge, around a century later.[5] Aristotle, in one of his prefaces critically reviewing the history of the topic under discussion, asserts that 'it is said that Parmenides was the pupil of [Xenophanes]' (ὁ γὰρ Παρμενίδης τούτου λέγεται γενέσθαι μαθητής, *Met.* 986b22).[6] The student–teacher model of intellectual succession, apparently visible on our cup and first attested in writing in Aristotle, would go on to be an important and persistent trope of the ancient history of philosophy as well as (other types of) literature.[7]

Our cup may attest to the durability of the student–teacher paradigm for conceptualising literary filiation and evidence its currency at a perhaps surprisingly early date. Yet while revealing one particular continuity with later sources, this image simultaneously instances the historical contingency behind all ancient literary-historical thinking. The school iconography from which this image derives first appears in the late sixth century and comes into vogue in the fifth,[8] providing key evidence for the nature of literate education. This vision of the literary past, in other words, is shaped by the evolving landscape of contemporary intellectual life.

Our cup invites us to broaden our perspective on the media and nature of literary history and challenges any assumption that literary-historical thinking was the discovery of an epigonal age or the exclusive concern of a narrow scholarly coterie. This image of the past serves an ideological purpose in the present. A pedagogical relationship between Musaeus and Linos would forge a legitimate line of succession between two authors often linked with the ur-poet Orpheus (West 1983: 39–44, 56–67). Musaeus played a role in the rites of Eleusis, and written texts attributed to him circulated in fifth-century Athens.[9] Our cup offers a possible

[5] Zalmoxis was Pythagoras' slave (δουλεῦσαι, Hdt. 4.95.1). Zeno was Parmenides' *eromenos* (Pl. παιδικά, *Prm.* 127b). Democritus was Leucippus' companion (ἑταῖρος, Arist. *Metaph.* 985b4). See also note 43 below.

[6] Aristotle's claim has attracted much discussion in connection with the 'Eleatisation' of Xenophanes. λέγεται perhaps looks to an evidentiary basis no more extensive and no less problematic than Pl. *Soph.* 242d.

[7] See, for example, Warren 2007 on Diogenes Laertius and the tradition of *diadochai* behind him. Like ancient art history (on which see Prioux, Citroni, and Romano in this volume), the ancient history of philosophy exhibits deep and fundamental congruities with ancient literary history.

[8] See now Oakley 2020: 103–12.

[9] Plato describes mountebanks who can produce a 'babble of books' by Orpheus and Musaeus (βίβλων δὲ ὅμαδον, *Resp.* 364e; cf. Hdt. 7.6.3). Graf 1974: 9–22 discusses connections between Orpheus, Musaeus, and Eleusis.

genealogical explanation for how these texts came into being. The image concerns writing, but it existed for the symposium and provides a clue about some of the sorts of conversations held there and elsewhere. Here we may catch a glimpse into the rich and overwhelmingly undocumented hinterlands of oral literary history on which surviving texts pervasively draw. This is literary history not as a recognisable genre of scholarship but rather as a mode of thinking woven into the fabric of life itself. Interest in the discipline of scholarship as it developed in the Hellenistic period should not lead us to underestimate the degree to which earlier eras were concerned with understanding the poetic past in their own distinctive ways.

Our cup encapsulates two central themes of this chapter: first, the complex interplay between orality and writing; second, the stability of literary-historical *topoi* coupled with the changing shape of literary culture. Whereas some modern scholarship seeks to pinpoint the 'invention' of proper, full-fledged literary history at some moment in antiquity,[10] I concern myself with all sorts of reflections on the literary past and study the assumptions and paradigms at work in our earliest sources. While highlighting the fundamental continuity of tropes and stock narratives, I also seek to understand the development of literary history in relation to the technology of writing and, concomitantly, in relation to an emergent ideology of classicism which literary-historical thinking both reacts to and further strengthens and concretises. Increasingly over the course of the archaic and classical periods, the archive of the past was conceptualised in terms of fixed, stable texts attributed to famous individual authors, and the methodology of literary history evolved to reflect this changing intellectual environment.

Section 1.2 briefly surveys immanent literary history in poetry from Homer to Aristophanes, typologising tropes which would endure through the ages and suggesting a skeletal metahistory of early literary history. Sections 1.3 and 1.4 then move forward in time and, not unrelatedly, shift from poetry to prose in order to consider in greater detail Glaucus of Rhegium's *On the Archaic Poets and Musicians* and then the *Mouseion* of the sophist Alcidamas. I explore how these treatises incorporate older material, deploy contemporary conceptual frameworks, and in turn prefigure much of later ancient literary history. Early instantiations of, respectively, a macroscopic narrative of progress and a literary biography, these

[10] Uhlmann 2007, van der Berg 2021.

two treatises also embody two foundational literary-historical tropes: the genealogy tracing diachronic influence and the contest that evinces enduring value. A conclusion returns to the bigger picture to consider the distinctive value of studying ancient literary history on its own terms.

1.2 Immanent Poetic History

There is no period of literature in which the present is not concerned to link itself with the past. One might hesitate to add the title of the first literary historian to Homer's haul of honours awarded by virtue of preservation, but inset depictions of poets within the *Odyssey* establish a legitimising connection between this poem and the time-honoured tradition which it both depicts and perpetuates.[11] Whatever may have been the historical differences between the *Odyssey*-poet and his Phemius, the former presents himself as continuing an established and, by implication, unbroken tradition of heroic song which bards like the latter were already practising during the heroic age. In such participatory, as opposed to observational, literary history the author continues the practices whose past he charts; at stake is the whole of the present text and how it fits into the world. As in much ancient poetry,[12] Homer's participatory literary history already bolsters the authority of his own work. This is one self-reflexive aspect of his pervasive rhetoric of traditionality.

Homer's literary history reflects the primarily oral culture from which it derives: a massive temporal gap separates the present from the past, and the link between them does not rely on the technology of writing. This immanent literary history is not textualised: it does not depend on individual works, whether written or not, achieving stability through space and time.[13] Bards may become famous (*Od.* 1.325, 8.497–8) and themes can become traditional among later generations (e.g. *Il.* 6.358, *Od.* 3.204), but there is never a clear sense that a poet's individualised and stable work directly influences the future. The Muse inspires the poet as she inspired his congeners long ago; her divine power erases the gap between ancient and contemporary poets as it erases the gap between the present-day poet and his heroic theme.

[11] Among a vast bibliography, see e.g. Ford 1992: Ch. 3 and Halliwell 2011: Ch. 2. This section builds on Spelman 2018a: Ch. 8 and 2021a, discussing Pindar and Old Comedy, respectively.
[12] See Hinds 1998: 123–44 on 'do-it-yourself' literary history and Gale and Fedeli in this volume.
[13] Textualisation admits of degrees and is related to, but not identical with, written transmission.

Odysseus praises Demodocus for accurately singing what he himself has experienced, thus vouchsafing the veracity and vividness of the bard's song (*Od.* 8.488–91):

ἢ σέ γε Μοῦσ' ἐδίδαξε, Διὸς πάϊς, ἢ σέ γ' Ἀπόλλων.
λίην γὰρ κατὰ κόσμον Ἀχαιῶν οἶτον ἀείδεις,
ὅσσ' ἔρξαν τ' ἔπαθόν τε καὶ ὅσσ' ἐμόγησαν Ἀχαιοί,
ὥς τέ που ἢ αὐτὸς παρεὼν ἢ ἄλλου ἀκούσας.

Truly you the Muse taught, the daughter of Zeus, or Apollo; for very much in order do you sing the woe of the Greeks, all they did, suffered and struggled, as if, I suppose, you yourself were there or heard from another.

Demodocus, unlike Musaeus on the cup considered above, has not learned from any mortal but directly from the immortal divinities of poetry itself.[14] In the invocation before the Catalogue of Ships, the Muses allow the *Iliad*-poet to access a similarly direct knowledge about the past (2.484–7):[15]

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι –
ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε, πάρεστέ τε, ἴστέ τε πάντα,
ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἷον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν –
οἵ τινες ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν·

Tell me now you Muses who have your homes on Olympus – for you are goddesses and are present and know all, while we hear only rumour and know nothing – who were the leaders and captains of the Danaans.

Humans normally hear 'only rumour', but the omniscient Muses will enable us to hear something better. Now, as in the heroic age, the divine permits the inspired singer to access truths beyond the realms of quotidian perception and epistemology.

Homer's immanent literary history is focused on continuity rather than on change, and it depends on a stable connection with the gods. After the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the link between present and past starts to become more reified. The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* recounts how the eponymous newborn god 'first engineered the tortoise as a singer' (πρώτιστα χέλυν τεκτήνατ' ἀοιδόν, 25). Having constructed the first lyre, he puts it to good use (54–9):

θεὸς δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄειδεν
ἐξ αὐτοσχεδίης πειρώμενος, ἠΰτε κοῦροι
ἡβηταὶ θαλίῃσι παραιβόλα κερτομέουσιν,

[14] Cf. *Od.* 22.347–8: αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἵμας | παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν, 'I am self-taught, for the god planted in my mind all sorts of paths of song'.
[15] For bibliography and discussion, see Spelman forthcoming.

ἀμφὶ Δία Κρονίδην καὶ Μαιάδα καλλιπέδιλον,
οἵ πάρος ὠρίζεσκον ἑταιρείῃ φιλότητι,
ἥν τ᾽ αὐτοῦ γενεὴν ὀνομακλυτὸν ἐξονομάζων.

The god sang in beautiful accompaniment, making a trial in improvisation, as boys in their prime making bantering interjections at feasts, about Zeus, Cronus' son, and Maia with her beautiful sandals, who previously would court in friendly love, naming his very own genealogy of glorious name.

The poet, who began his hymn by asking the Muse to sing of Hermes' birth (1–5), honours the god by participating in a hymnic tradition which the god himself inaugurated. This is, again, participatory literary history which self-reflexively augments the authority of the text. Yet whereas the immanent literary history of heroic epic is essentially continuous, here we also have a story of one-off change: an instrument is invented in a single moment long ago and handed down into the present.

This passage is among of the earliest examples of the motif of the first discoverer (*prōtos heuretēs*). From early on this crystallised into a formally recognisable *topos* of cultural history that could be applied across a wide variety of fields.[16] The trope remains fundamental to later ancient literary history, Aristotle included (e.g. *Poet.* 1448a12–13, 1449a15–17, 1449b7–8), but it does not necessarily entail textualisation. What endures is usually a physical thing like an instrument or a practice like a genre, not the works of individual authors.

As one progresses further into the classical period, gods, heroes, semi-legendary figures, and historical individuals come to be credited with a great many inventions, which are increasingly specific. In this period, the archive of the past is filling up, and the past encompassed within literary history approaches the *spatium historicum*. As West 2011: 51 writes, 'we get the impression [that Pindar] had in his head the materials for a history of early Greek poetry and music'. He credits a god with the invention of one *nomos* (*Pyth.* 12.19–27; cf. [Plut.] *De mus.* 1136c) and the Locrian Xenocritus (fr. 140b) with the invention of another. Terpander is credited with discovering the *barbitos* (fr. 125) and probably also with inventing genre of *scholia* ([Plut.] *De mus.* 1140f). Pindar also traced the origin of dithyramb – and perhaps its subsequent development into a more formally sophisticated art form.[17]

[16] Kleingünther 1933 remains fundamental; see now Billings 2021: 34–6.

[17] Frr. 71, 85, and 115 concern the origin of the dithyramb (cf. *Nem.* 8.50–1). *Ol.* 13.18–19 probably implicates Arion (cf. Hellanic. 4 F 86 *FGrH*). *Dithy.* 2 somehow embodies a new style of dithyramb. See now Prodi 2021.

The literary history of the first inventor is standardly self-serving: it forges a legitimising link between present and past, thereby enabling reflection on the nature of the tradition connecting them. In the fifth century we also start to encounter more complex but equally self-serving narratives of progress and decline.[18] Thus Pindar's complex choral epinician sets itself against a simple, repetitive proto-epinician attributed to Archilochus (*Ol.* 9.1–10). 'Praise old wine', the poet later enjoins, 'but the flowers of newer songs' (αἴνει δὲ παλαιὸν μὲν οἶνον, ἄνθεα δ' ὕμνων | νεωτέρων, 48–9). *Isthmian* 2, by contrast, traces a narrative of decline from the erotic lyric of old, composed from genuine emotion, to the bought-and-sold encomiastic poetry of the present (1–12). Aristophanes' *Frogs* stages a competition between the most two basic plots of literary history: Aeschylus argues for a narrative of moral decline from the Marathon generation down to a debased present dominated by Euripides (e.g. 1013–17; cf. Eup. 148 *PCG*); Euripides instead advocates a progressive narrative of increasing intellectual sophistication in which he advances on Aeschylus' primitive drama (e.g. 939–44; cf. Ar. fr. 265 *PCG* with Spelman 2021b). Already in the classical period narratives of decline tend to be moralising and narratives of progress tend to be more narrowly technical.[19]

Narratives of progress and decline can weave together multiple plot points and thereby chart a story more complex than the simple 'before and after' of an invention. Such narratives usually cover a smaller range of time which is closer to the present, and the mythical past is generally not at issue; what is at stake is change within a period that is continuously remembered. Past and present can be compared, and a certain degree of textuality is inherent. Thus Pindar's *Olympian* 9 refers to a song attributed to Archilochus known to the audience, and in *Isthmian* 2 he presumes to know what the work of older erotic poets was like; indeed, Pindar might make highly specific, textualised allusions to the canonical poets Anacreon and Alcaeus.[20]

Narratives of progress and decline normally feature protagonists who are not gods, heroes, or figures of murky historicity but rather famous authors of preserved works. Thus Pherecrates has his Aeschylus declare that 'I constructed and handed down to them a great craft' (ὅστις <γ'> αὐτοῖς παρέδωκα τέχνην μεγάλην ἐξοικοδομήσας, fr. 100 *PCG*). The tragedian's successors will inherit from him an enduring, permanent structure. Aristophanes, probably echoing Pherecrates, awards himself a similar role

[18] On later narrative of progress and decline see de Jonge and Citroni in this volume.
[19] See especially Citroni in this volume.
[20] See Hunter pp. 289–90 in this volume for bibliography and further discussion.

within a parallel narrative of progress for comedy: '[Aristophanes] made for you a great craft and built it up into a towering structure' (ἐποίησε τέχνην μεγάλην ὑμῖν κἀπύργωσ' οἰκοδομήσας, *Pax* 749). Both passages concern the contribution of an individual author whose works directly shape the future.

Fifth-century narratives of progress and decline standardly presume stable texts and spotlight famous historical figures. Such a framework may plausibly be connected with the growing importance of writing used to hand down works through time and an incipient sense of classicism surrounding certain preserved authors perceived to have canonical value.

1.3 Glaucus of Rhegium

The late fifth and early fourth centuries constitute an inflection point in the history of ancient literary history. Various literary-historical topics had long been mentioned in poetry and prose alike, but we now hear of works dedicated to the literary past as a discrete subject. Hellanicus of Lesbos' *Carneian Victors* focused on the prestigious eponymous festival in Sparta, but extant fragments show that its concerns reached beyond the parochial (4 F 85–6 *FGrH*). It seems that one record provided the hard chronological backbone for a wider exploration of early panhellenic musico-poetic history.[21] Damastes of Sigeum, who was remembered as Hellanicus' pupil,[22] wrote a work entitled *On Poets and Sophists* (5 T 1 and F 11 *FGrH*) – from which little or nothing besides the title survives. The fragments of Glaucus of Rhegium's similarly entitled *On the Archaic Poets and Musicians* represent only the most extensive surviving evidence for what seems to have been a nascent type of work.[23]

The most substantial fragments convey a consistent picture of Glaucus' interests and conceptual apparatus:[24]

Glaucus fr. 1 = [Plut.] *De mus*. 1132e–33a:

> πρεσβύτερον γοῦν αὐτὸν Ἀρχιλόχου ἀποφαίνει Γλαῦκος ὁ ἐξ Ἰταλίας ἐν συγγράμματί τινι τῷ Περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ποιητῶν τε καὶ μουσικῶν· φησὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν δεύτερον γενέσθαι μετὰ τοὺς πρώτους ποιήσαντας

[21] Franklin 2010: 19. The 'Sicyonian Anagraphe' was perhaps an analogous record which traced various inventions: Lanata 1963: 282–3, Christesen 2007: 517–18. Lists of victors in the Athenian dramatic festival, the ancestors of Aristotle's *Didascaliae*, may have existed in the classical period: Biles 2011: Ch. 3.

[22] Damastes T 1 Fowler with Fowler 2000–2013: ii.644.

[23] Hippias' *Synagogē* has often been thought to have provided a doxographical and historical account of early thinking that encompassed both poetry and prose: so e.g. Mansfeld 1990: 22–96; but see now Andolfi 2023.

[24] Text and numeration after Lanata 1963. Ucciardello 2007 provides orientation.

> αὐλῳδίαν . . . ἐζηλωκέναι δὲ τὸν Τέρπανδρον Ὁμήρου μὲν τὰ ἔπη, Ὀρφέως δὲ τὰ μέλη. ὁ δ' Ὀρφεὺς οὐδένα φαίνεται μεμιμημένος· οὐδεὶς γάρ πω γεγένητο, εἰ μὴ οἱ τῶν αὐλῳδικῶν ποιηταί· τούτοις δὲ κατ' οὐθὲν τὸ Ὀρφικὸν ἔργον ἔοικε.
>
> Glaucus of Italy demonstrates that Terpander is older than Archilochus in a certain treatise, *On the Ancient Poets and Musicians*. For he says that [Terpander] was born after those who first composed aulody . . . [Glaucus says that] Terpander imitated Homer's hexameters and Orpheus' songs. But Orpheus seems to have imitated no one; for no one yet had been born, if not for the poets of aulody. Yet Orpheus' work is in no way similar to theirs.

Glaucus fr. 2 = [Plut.] *De Mus*. 1133e–f:

> ὅτι δ' ἐστὶν Ὀλύμπου ὁ Ἁρμάτειος νόμος ἐκ τῆς Γλαύκου ἀναγραφῆς τῆς ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀρχαίων ποιητῶν μάθοι ἄν τις, καὶ ἔτι γνοίη ὅτι Στησίχορος ὁ Ἱμεραῖος οὔτ' Ὀρφέα οὔτε Τέρπανδρον οὔτ' Ἀρχίλοχον οὔτε Θαλήταν ἐμιμήσατο, ἀλλ' Ὄλυμπον, χρησάμενος τῷ Ἁρματείῳ νόμῳ καὶ τῷ κατὰ δάκτυλον εἴδει.
>
> One may learn from Glaucus' writing about the ancient poets that the chariot *nomos* belongs to [i.e. was invented by] Olympus, and one may also learn that Stesichorus of Himera, who used the chariot *nomos* and the dactylic form, imitated neither Orpheus nor Terpander nor Archilochus nor Thaletas but rather Olympus.

Glaucus fr. 3 = [Plut.] *De Mus*. 1134d–e:

> Γλαῦκος γὰρ μετ' Ἀρχίλοχον φάσκων γεγενῆσθαι Θαλήταν, μεμιμῆσθαι μὲν αὐτόν φησι τὰ Ἀρχιλόχου μέλη, ἐπὶ δὲ τὸ μακρότερον ἐκτεῖναι καὶ παίωνα καὶ κρητικὸν ῥυθμὸν εἰς τὴν μελοποιίαν ἐνθεῖναι· οἷς Ἀρχίλοχον μὴ κεχρῆσθαι, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Ὀρφέα οὐδὲ Τέρπανδρον· ἐκ γὰρ τῆς Ὀλύμπου αὐλήσεως Θαλήταν φασὶν ἐξειργάσθαι ταῦτα, καὶ δόξαι ποιητὴν ἀγαθὸν γεγονέναι . . . πρεσβύτερον δὲ τῇ ἡλικίᾳ φησὶν ὁ Γλαῦκος Θαλήταν Ξενοκρίτου γεγονέναι.
>
> For Glaucus, claiming that Thaletas was later than Archilochus, says that he imitated the songs of Archilochus but stretched them further and inserted into his song-making the paeonic and cretic rhythms, which Archilochus had not used, nor Orpheus nor Terpander, for they say that Thaletas developed them from Olympus' *aulos* music and acquired the reputation of being a good poet . . . Glaucus says that Thaletas was older than Xenocritus.

One gets the impression of a catalogue of familiar, grand names (cf. δόξαι, fr. 3) with observations on the interconnections between them. The noun ἀναγραφή, 'record, register' (LSJ[9] s.v.), which the *De musica* (1133f = fr. 2)

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applies to Glaucus' text, corroborates this impression.[25] Chronological sequence is at the heart of this project, and there emerges from the fragments an internally consistent line of succession stretching all the way from Orpheus down to Xenocritus and Stesichorus. Imitation is the engine of development (ἐμιμήσατο, fr. 2; μεμιμῆσθαι, fr. 3) and can be invoked to determine chronology. There seems to be little room for social or political influence; as in many later congeners, literary history is conceived as an inward-facing conversation among artists, almost hermetically sealed off from the wider world.

Glaucus writes about music and metre and may well not have even known of written texts attributed to some of his subjects, but the overarching idea of influence is thoroughly textualised: from time immemorial the works of individuals from across the Greek world travelled through space and time to reach far-flung poets who imitated illustrious predecessors. There is no crucial conceptual difference between 'mythical' and 'historical' periods; Orpheus and Stesichorus are presumed to work under essentially similar cultural conditions. Rather than conceptualising literary history in terms of literal genealogies or face-to-face pupil-student relationships,[26] he assumes a network in which the productions of geographically and temporally distant authors became common property and new poets added, modified, and augmented a unified body of art. Glaucus tracks certain sorts of historical change while retrojecting into the distant past the historically contingent panhellenic world of song familiar to his contemporary readers.

In some ways Glaucus' project may be understood as a systematisation of the old *topos* of the first finder, which now underpins a continuous narrative.[27] But that would be an oversimplification. Glaucus was also interested in tracking more complex forms of change. Terpander (fr. 1) and Thaletas (fr. 3) did not simply 'invent' something wholly novel; they drew on diverse influences to fashion something new by way of hybridization. Like many later ancient literary historians, Glaucus was tracing a progressive master narrative of growing sophistication over time: he charted 'musical forms in an evolution toward increasing rationality and

[25] Compare, for example, Demetrius of Phaleron's record of archons (ἐν τῇ τῶν ἀρχόντων ἀναγραφῇ, 228 F 1–3 *FGrH*) and Aristotle's record of Pythian victors (ἐν τῇ τῶν πυθιονικῶν ἀναγραφῇ, fr. 615 Rose).

[26] Early genealogies of poets: Montanari 2017: 157–63.

[27] Cf. τοὺς πρώτους ποιήσαντας αὐλῳδίαν (fr. 1); Ὀλύμπου ὁ Ἁρμάτειος νόμος (fr. 2); Kleingünther (1933) 139–40. Narratives of progress and decline incorporating discoveries: Timoth. 791.221–36 *PMG*, Pherecrates 155 *PCG*.

formal complexity' (Ford 2002: 141). What changes in this story, as in many later texts, is not necessarily aesthetic quality; Glaucus' focus is on formal, technical matters. His investigations into the poetic past were presumably grounded in his own experiences as a practising musician, at least to the extent of being a traditionally educated elite male.[28]

The very title *On the Archaic Poets and Musicians*, whether original or not,[29] bespeaks a fundamentally classicising orientation. Glaucus was probably writing in the late fifth or early fourth century,[30] but there is no reason to suppose that he covered recent or contemporary poetry. Orpheus is the oldest figure in the securely attributed fragments (fr. 1); the youngest are Xenocritus and Stesichorus (fr. 2),[31] and the latter was already branded as old-fashioned in Old Comedy (Eup. 148 *PCG*; cf. fr. 326, 398 *PCG*, Ar. *Nub*. 1357). Glaucus' literary history focused on famous figures from the primeval and relatively distant past, and his classicising interests may not have been confined to this book. If *On the Myths of Aeschylus* (fr. 7) is attributable to our Glaucus, as most have supposed,[32] then he also wrote a book about a tragedian who had been dead for perhaps half a century and, as is evident from Old Comedy, had already been canonised by the last quarter of the fifth century.

Glaucus' literary history itself emerges from a moment of significant change in the history of Greek poetry and music. The late fifth and early fourth centuries saw the rise of what modern scholars term 'New Music', a movement centred around the sort of technical and metrical matters at the very heart of Glaucus' interests. Indeed, poets of the so-called New Music frequently frame their own literary histories and make prominent claims to innovation.[33] Glaucus, as far as we can tell and as the title of his work suggests, paid no attention to New Music and its self-assertions to

[28] Elite musical education: Spelman 2019. Jacoby 1912: 1419 hypothesises that Glaucus was a practicing aulete. He could be the Pythagorean Glaucus who experimented with Hippasus' instruments (Aristox. fr. 90 Wehrli, West 1992: 234 n. 38).

[29] The *De musica* cites '*On the Ancient Poets and Musicians*' (Περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ποιητῶν τε καὶ μουσικῶν, 1132e = fr. 1) and 'the record about the ancient poets' (ἀναγραφῆς τῆς ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀρχαίων ποιητῶν, 1133f = fr. 2). Note [Plut.] *Vit. dec. orat.* 833d (περὶ ποιητῶν βιβλίον).

[30] Diogenes Laertius (9.38), the most important source for Glaucus' date, claims that he lived at the same time as the inconveniently long-lived Democritus.

[31] Glaucus mentioned Empedocles (fr. 6 = DL 8.52 = Apollod. 244 F 32a *FGrH*), but this could have been in a separate work, perhaps the same that discussed Democritus (fr. 5 = DL 9.38, quoted below), who was neither a poet nor a musician. Fr. 6 displays biographical concerns, shared with fr. 5, and an absolute chronological method that does not harmonise with the fragments securely attributable to *On Ancient Poets and Musicians*.

[32] Fowler 2019 casts fresh doubt on this commonly accepted attribution.

[33] Melanippides 758, Timoth. 791.202–36, 796, Telestes 805, 806, 810 *PMG*. See, in general, LeVen 2014: 86–112.

literary-historical significance. He excavated the past of traditional music when it was perceived, at least in some circles, to be imperilled by pernicious radical innovations. Perhaps Glaucus' silence is to be heard alongside louder, more explicitly hostile reactions to 'New Music' among intellectual and social elites.[34] His literary history, in other words, perhaps supports a conservative ideological agenda rooted in the present.

Glaucus' history more certainly reflects its historical environment in other ways. He did not make up this material from whole cloth;[35] like many early historians, he will have drawn on oral sources, weaving disparate traditions into a cohesive whole (cf. φασίν, fr. 3, which may or may not reflect the source text). For its first audiences, the value of this work will have resided partly in its presentation of a unified, continuous narrative which integrated various points of accepted data. Pindar may have already had 'the concept of an evolutionary history' (West 2011: 59) and the necessary 'materials . . . in his head' (West 2011: 51), but Glaucus put his history down in writing.

Glaucus organises traditional material using conceptual frameworks that were commonplace in his day. He relies on the same basic postulates at work in more punctual, ad hoc moments of literary-historical reflection in classical verse: poetry and music are conceived as a unified field in which famous individuals transmit works through time and space and react to the accumulated archive of the past in order to contribute to a continuous narrative of increasing sophistication.

Known and unknown gaps and uncertainties in the evidential record problematise any attribution of originality, but Glaucus embodies an important step in the history of ancient literary history, at least as far as we can trace it. Several factors help to explain such a work. Among the most obvious is the growing importance of literacy itself, to which may be connected the rising prestige of prose and an ever-expanding archive of prose texts. Glaucus himself wrote for a broad, indefinite public, and it is hard to imagine his work existing in the absence of such an audience. His outlook is panhellenic in scope; there is no trace of localism. He wrote not in his native dialect but in language which had become conventional.[36] His book may well have been symptomatic of a counter-reaction to contemporary innovations and certainly featured a cast list of familiar old names. In these respects *On the Archaic Poets and Musicians* can be

[34] On which see e.g. LeVen 2014: 6–7. [35] Cf. Pöhlmann 2011.

[36] [Plut.] *Vit. dec. orat.* 833c (= Antiphon 87 A6 DK) reports that some attributed Glaucus' literary history to Antiphon the Sophist. This suggests Attic Greek.

viewed as another expression of an incipient classicism also evidenced in other sources.[37]

Our knowledge of Glaucus' book depends in large part on a much later work of literary history: the *De musica* falsely attributed to Plutarch preserves all three fragments printed above. This derivative treatise, which postdates Alexander Polyhistor (cited at 1132f = 273 F 77 *FGrH*), has a confused and confusing relationship to its source material.[38] The resultant situation complicates any reconstruction of Glaucus' thought. It is uncertain whether the compiler knew Glaucus' book first-hand or only through other, more famous literary historians, like the Peripatetics Aristoxenus of Tarentum and Heraclides of Pontus, who had already mined their own predecessor. Glaucus is the oldest authority cited in the *De musica*, and his influence has occasionally been thought, rather optimistically, to be more pervasive and fundamental than the explicit citations would suggest. When the *De musica* does cite Glaucus, moreover, scholars often disagree about precisely how much should be attributed to him. On the one hand, this situation frustratingly multiplies uncertainties. On the other hand, these uncertainties themselves point to a larger and more important truth: unless even the most secure traces are cruelly misleading, Glaucus' literary history was similar enough to that of later ages that we sometimes cannot tell what comes from his pen and what is centuries younger. This conundrum is to be attributed less to the influence of one relatively obscure author and more to the fact that Glaucus' work embodies a set of historically contingent assumptions which were taking hold when he wrote and which would go on to underpin much of later literary history.

1.4 Alcidamas' *Mouseion* (or *On Homer*)

With its narrative of technical progress, Glaucus' *On the Archaic Poets and Musicians* is an early example of a persistent theoretical thread in ancient literary-historical thinking. The *Mouseion* of the fourth-century sophist Alcidamas embodies a no less important biographical stain.

As the *De musica* preserves the most substantial traces of Glaucus' work, so *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (= the *Contest*), which postdates Hadrian, provides the most extensive evidence for the nature of Alcidamas' work. In this case, however, there is reason to be more optimistic about how much the

[37] See e.g. Porter 2006b, Hanink 2014, Hadjimichael 2019.
[38] See the survey of Weil and Reinach 1900: iv–xxiii.

later treatise reflects its antecedent. In fact, most scholars now hold that Alcidamas 'wrote a version of the [*Contest*] essentially the same as the extant one' (O'Sullivan 1992: 64) because a series of subsequent papyrological discoveries have combined to corroborate the thesis of Nietzsche 1873. The most important among these is a Michigan papyrus (Inv. 2754, published 1925) which offers an account of Homer's death that parallels the *Contest* with relatively trivial differences in diction (lines 1–14 ≈ *Cert.* 327–38). There then follows, however, an envoi which, significantly, lacks any parallel (14–25):

> . . . οὕτ̣ως, φασίν, ἐτελεύτησεν.
> περὶ τ̣ούτου μὲ̣ν οὖν ποιεῖσθαι τὴν ἀρετὴν πει-
> ράσομεν, μάλιστα δ' ὁρῶν<τες> τοὺς ἱστορικοὺς θαυ-
> μαζομένους. Ὅμ̣ηρος γοῦν διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ζῶν
> καὶ ἀποθαν̣ὼν τ̣ε̣τ̣ίμηται παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώ-
> ποις. ταύτ̣ης ο̣ὖν αὐτῶ<ι> τῆς παιδ<ε>ίας χάριν ἀ-
> ποδίδ̣ω̣[μι, τὸ γ]ένος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἄλλ̣ην ποί-
> ησιν δι' ἀκ̣[ριβ]είας μνήμης τοῖς βουλομέ-
> νοις φι̣λ̣[οκαλ]εῖν τῶν Ελλήνων εἰς τὸ κοινὸν
> παραδο[ύς.]
>
> [Ἀλκ]ι̣δάμαντος
> περὶ Ὁμήρου

> . . . Thus, they say, he [sc. Homer] died. About this man, then, we will try to display our excellence, especially seeing that historians are admired. Homer, at any rate, for this reason [i.e. because he was a historian] has been honored among all mankind both when he was alive and after his death. So then I return the favor for this education by handing over through precision of memory into the public realm his origin and his poetry as well for those among the Greeks who want to pursue what is beautiful.
>
> Alcidamas, *On Homer*

This is difficult Greek carelessly copied, and there is ample room for debate about many details. There is also the larger question of what this text is. Whereas many suppose that it is the conclusion to the epilogue of Alcidamas' *Mouseion*, which then went on to deal with poets besides Homer, I have argued elsewhere that the papyrus *subscriptio* is not fundamentally misleading: this is the end of Alcidamas' whole *Mouseion*, which was also known by the later alternative title *On Homer*.[39]

[39] Spelman 2023, which defends the text and translation offered above; cf. Porter 2021. With the exception of the Michigan papyrus, references to Alcidamas follow Avezzù 1982. References to the *Contest* follow Allen 1912.

Wherever these words appeared, they seem to conclude what one could call a biography. This text covered Homer's death (ἐτελεύτησεν, 14), and γ]ένος (20) shows that it also included his birth, as does the *Contest* (1–53).[40] Alcidamas evidently encompassed Homer's life, from cradle to grave. The papyrus title corroborates this inference. In post-classical antiquity, the titular formula *On poet X* (περὶ τοῦ δεῖνα) was a conventional label for literary biographies.[41] If Alcidamas' *Mouseion* was indeed such a work, then it becomes the earliest text that we know of focused, at least primarily, on the life of one poet – although it is profoundly unsurprising, for reasons covered in this chapter, to find such a work in this period.[42]

Alcidamas' biographical concerns were not confined to the *Mouseion*; compare fr. 8 (= DL 8.56):

> Ἀλκιδάμας δ' ἐν τῷ Φυσικῷ φησι κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους Ζήνωνα καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλέα ἀκοῦσαι Παρμενίδου, εἶθ' ὕστερον ἀποχωρῆσαι, καὶ τὸν μὲν Ζήνωνα κατ' ἰδίαν φιλοσοφῆσαι, τὸν δὲ Ἀναξαγόρου διακοῦσαι καὶ Πυθαγόρου· καὶ τοῦ μὲν τὴν σεμνότητα ζηλῶσαι τοῦ τε βίου καὶ τοῦ σχήματος, τοῦ δὲ τὴν φυσιολογίαν.
>
> Alcidamas says in his *Physikon* that Zeno and Empedocles lived at the same time and listened to Parmenides, then afterwards they went away; Zeno did philosophy in his own way, while Empedocles listened to Anaxagoras and Pythagoras and emulated the dignity of the latter's life and appearance and the physical theory of the former.

There are manifest similarities with Glaucus' work discussed above. Alcidamas maps a network of five major early thinkers. The nodes of connection, whatever their historical plausibility, are founded on traceable affinities. The engine of influence is pupillage and imitation (ζηλῶσαι), which allows for hybridisation.[43]

[40] Cf. *Vita Herodotea* 538–9 Allen: τὰ μὲν οὖν ὑπὲρ τῆς γενέσιος καὶ τελευτῆς καὶ βίου δεδήλωταί μοι, 'I have made clear these things concerning his origin, death, and life'.

[41] Schorn 2018: 105: 'so war offensichtlich die übliche Titelgebung für Lebensbeschreibungen von Dichtern vom Typ Περὶ τοῦ δεῖνα'.

[42] The attribution of a biography of Empedocles to Xanthus of Lydia rests on very thin grounds: 765 fr. 33 *BNJ*. Tatian asserts that various authors, some older than Alcidamas, wrote about Homer's poetry, origin, and chronology (ποιήσεως γένους τε αὐτοῦ καὶ χρόνου, *Ad Gr*. 31.3 Marcovich). As the preserved instance of Herodotus shows, each author needs not have written about each topic, let alone something like a biography. On later biography and literary history see Lefkowitz and Stok in this volume.

[43] With ἀκοῦσαι and διακοῦσαι compare Glaucus fr. 5 (= DL 9.38): τῶν Πυθαγορικῶν τινος ἀκοῦσαί φησιν αὐτὸν Γλαῦκος ὁ Ῥηγῖνος, 'Glaucus of Rhegium says that [Democritus] listened to one of the Pythagoreans'.

On the Michigan papyrus at the end of the *Mouseion* Alcidamas frames himself as a historian (τοὺς ἱστορικούς, 16),[44] and his project is recognisable as a form of history. Like Herodotus and other early chroniclers (cf. e.g. Hdt. 2.123, Creophylus of Ephesus fr. 1, Hellanicus of Lesbos fr. 26a Fowler), he presents himself as recording pre-existing accounts about the past. His citation of what 'they say' (φασίν, 14) should be taken seriously. Already Heraclitus of Ephesus (22 B 56 DK) knew the riddle of the lice which is recounted on the Michigan papyrus (1–14). More generally scholars agree that Alcidamas did not invent the story of the contest between Homer and Hesiod but rather channelled old, widespread traditions.[45] Such tales were in circulation from early on and repeatedly crop up in surviving texts, but there is no evidence that anyone before Alcidamas had written a continuous and extensive narrative of Homer's life. For its first audiences the appeal of this work, like Glaucus' literary history, will have resided partly in how it integrated familiar data points into a novel whole that was more than the sum of its parts.

The appeal of this work also involved Alcidamas' distinctive artistry. With the penultimate word of his narrative he cites its traditional background (φασίν, 14), but he then highlights his own individual authorial excellence (τὴν ἀρετήν, 15). Alcidamas was not just passively recording what was already out there. In the *Contest* the eponymous competition is the fulcrum for parallel lives: Hesiod and Homer both misunderstand an oracle and then die.[46] It is attractive to attribute this overarching structure, which has no parallel in the other ancient lives, to Alcidamas. Even on the implausible hypothesis that everything in the *Mouseion* was traditional, he must have reshaped his material, both on a global scale and on the level of diction, into a self-consciously literary form.

Like the cup with which this chapter began, Alcidamas' literary history serves an ideological purpose in the present. His biography of Homer is about its author as well as its subject. By framing himself as Homer's heir, Alcidamas blurs the boundary between participatory and observational literary history. He employs stories about Homer much as the sophists used heroic myth: as a framework for thinking through contemporary

[44] A minority instead favours a more general translation (e.g. 'autori di scritti eruditi', Avezzù 1982: 51), but the substantive masculine adjective never had any other sense in antiquity. The usage is already attested at Arist. *Poet.* 1451a38–b1.

[45] E.g. Vogt 1959: 221, Richardson 1981, Konstantakos 2020: 48. The word *Volksbuch*, sometimes invoked in older discussions, bespeaks misunderstandings about early literacy. Rhapsodes told stories about Homer and composed poems reflecting those stories (Spelman 2018b), but there is no evidence for an archaic epic dedicated to any post-heroic individual.

[46] See especially West 1967: 444–9.

concerns (cf. Morgan 2000: 105–30). As Nietzsche (1873: 220) and many since have observed, in the *Contest*, and so presumably also in the *Mouseion*, Homer excels in the sort of improvisational skill which Alcidamas exalts in *On the Sophists*, his sole surviving work of undisputed authenticity. The honour paid to Homer during his lifetime and afterward parallels the honour to which Alcidamas lays claim at the end of his work. Modern scholars often observe that the sophists position themselves as successors to the canonical poets; Alcidamas himself makes the point rather explicitly.

The Michigan papyrus prefigures some of core paradoxes of much of later literary biography. Modern scholars inquire into the methodological problems of classifying ancient biography as a sub-genre of historiography; Alcidamas himself raises related issues. With the text and translation adopted above, Alcidamas presents Homer as a historian and himself as a historian following in the poet's footsteps toward glory. But matters are not quite so simple – as one might expect when dealing with Gorgias' pupil. Already in the classical period Homer's historical value was contested (Kim 2010: Ch. 2). Though the poet was frequently mined as a source for truth about the past (e.g. Thuc. 1.10.3–5), classical intellectuals repeatedly take it for granted that poets aim at pleasure rather than truth; some enlightened folk were certainly prepared to read their Homer as primarily 'fiction' rather than history.[47] By framing Homer as a historian, Alcidamas thus casts doubt on the seriousness of his own claim to be a historian. To the extent that one is willing to read Homeric epic as history, to that extent one reads Alcidamas' biography of Homer as history. This work thereby situates itself on 'the blurred borderline between historicity and fictionality that is commonly accepted . . . to characterize ancient biography' (De Temmerman 2016: 3). The end of the *Mouseion* knowingly flags up a complex and usually implicit tension between historical truth and poetic fictionality which runs, sometimes underappreciated, throughout much ancient biography.

As Glaucus prefigures subsequent ancient literary-historiography, so Alcidamas anticipates later literary biography. Both embody modes of thinking normally associated with later epochs and belong to roughly the same era. The end of Alcidamas' work more overtly implicates some of the historical factors which the preceding section connected with Glaucus.

[47] E.g. Pl. *Grg.* 501e–502a, *Resp.* 607c, *Dissoi Logoi* 90 2.28 DK, Currie 2021: 28–35. Alcidamas praised Homer's *Odyssey* as 'a beautiful mirror of human life' (καλὸν ἀνθρωπίνου βίου κάτοπτρον, fr. 34), i.e. as an aesthetic object conveying truths which are not, in the first instance, historical.

Like Glaucus, Alcidamas drew on oral traditions (φασίν, 14). Classicism motivates the *Mouseion*, too, and this work in turn further reenforces the process of classicisation. Homer has been continually honoured by all mankind (τετίμηται παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, 18–19), and Alcidamas now honours him yet further with a work that records his life. Here literary history is both a reaction to Homer's established canonicity and also a new reification of his centrality to all Greek culture. Like Glaucus, Alcidamas wrote for a panhellenic readership. As Homer's poetry has won him honour from all mankind, so Alcidamas publishes his prose 'into the common realm' (εἰς τὸ κοινόν, 22) to win his own share of glory.[48]

The end of the *Mouseion* offers a glimpse into the self-conception of an imaginary community of readers. Alcidamas writes not for all of humanity (πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, 18–19) but for those Greeks who want to read him (τοῖς βουλομένοις . . . τῶν Ελλήνων, 21–2). However one supplements φι̣λ̣[. . . .]ειν (22), the verb valorises reading. φι̣λ̣[οκαλ]εῖν (*fere* Hunt), would fit the space and also suit the ideological thrust.[49] It was indeed among elites who 'wanted to pursue what is beautiful' by reading written texts that new forms of literary history emerged over the course of the classical period.

1.5 Conclusion

As other essays in this volume demonstrate, classical visions of the literary past remained influential. Later writers look back, directly or indirectly, not only to Plato and Aristotle but still further to authors like Pindar, Thucydides, and Aristophanes.[50] Beginning the history of ancient literary history with the great Athenian philosophers obscures how much they depended upon older frameworks, assumptions, and tropes. Plato's story of archaic purity overturned (*Leg.* 700a–701b; cf. *Resp.* 424c = Damon 37 B 10 DK) replays, with novel theoretical baggage, a tale of decline which had already been played out in earlier literary texts (cf. e.g. Eupolis 148, Pherecrates 155 *PCG*). Aristotle's history of genres in the *Poetics* adapts to his distinctive teleological framework a narrative of increasing sophistication whose building blocks are visible in many older sources, including Glaucus of Rhegium. Rather than trying to pin down 'the invention of literary history' to one moment, we might do better to investigate how

[48] ἀποδίδω[μι (19–20) and παραδο[ύς (23) describe publication: cf. Nicolai 2004: 179–80. Note Alcidamas 1.201–2: 'being eager to leave behind memorials (μνημεῖα καταλιπεῖν) of myself and gratifying my love of honour I put my hand to writing speeches' (cf. 178–9).

[49] Spelman 2019 discusses literacy and elite self-definition.

[50] See Lefkowitz and Hunter in this volume.

tropes of literary-historical thinking emerge over time and are modified and recombined to suit the ideological purposes of different authors, eras, and cultures.

Comparing ancient and modern literary history, Russell (1981: 159) writes that 'there can be little doubt that the historical study of literature in antiquity was very rudimentary by modern standards'. The foundational works of modern literary history which provide the point of comparison themselves derive from a particular time and reflect its contingent ideology (Most 2008). Ancient literary history was no less historically situated, and it is important partly for that reason. Its value need not be as a source of documentary truth; indeed, when our literary history closely resembles its ancient antecedent, that can be a good sign that we should think again, and more carefully. The value of ancient literary history instead derives in no small part from the evidence which it provides for how the ancients conceptualised the field of literature and the archive of the past – and how mentalities changed over time. The authors studied in this chapter offer insights into a period in which the relationship between literature and writing underwent far-reaching changes whose reverberations would be felt for many centuries. As Perkins (1992: ix) writes, 'the history of literary history is a fascinating one'.