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# QUEER (A)EDI-(M)OLOGY: ON CALLIMACHUS' *AETIA* PROLOGUE

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*Ma faim qui d'aucuns fruits ici ne se régale*
*Trouve en leur docte manque une saveur égale*
Stephane Mallarmé, 'Adieu'

*It's been a long, long, long time*
The Beatles

*Greedier than a dog,*
*big-boned, rangy she grew up; was sometimes gaunt, then fat…*
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Who fed this muse?'

In the prologue of Callimachus' *Aetia*, every single word opens up a wide, virtually boundless spectrum of suggestions, intimations, and evocations. In this paper, I heed Callimachus' formal intricacies, joining the decoding game that has vexed and entertained ancient and modern readers by homing in on the para-etymological potentialities of the verb ἀείδω ('I sing'). I wish to explore the possibility that, in this architext of Callimachean programmatics, 'singing' may amount to a sort of aesthetic satisfaction in self-deprivation, with formal elements mobilizing a spiral of eating and non-eating. This exploration offers the opportunity to think about Callimachean 'singing' as a challenge to conventional notions of human subjectivity and to the very idea of poetic immortality, expressing something like the wish of a *poète maudit* not for monumental permanence, but for a looping insistence. We may then see Callimachean aesthetics as less rarefied, aristocratic, and decorous than it is usually made out to be. In the recalcitrance, the unruly looping of poetic form, we may glimpse an aesthetic sense that is more subversive, shaped by temporal stuckness, a rejection of fulfillment, and a hunger that rejects the lack that is satisfaction. I first locate the possibility of an alternative para-etymologizing of ἀείδω within the prologue's discourse of corporeality, in its precarious opposition of thinness and fatness. I then search the epigram dedicated to Heraclitus and the *Hymn to Demeter* for traces of the restless aesthetics inherent in this para-etymologizing, which I will ultimately connect with queer temporality. The Callimachean hymn invites us to see the

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poetic persona of the *Aetia*'s proem in a new light—as a counterpart of the starving binge eater Erysichthon, Demeter's enemy, who is barely distinguishable from the goddess herself.

Policing poetological size and weight, regulating not just 'big' and 'small' but also 'fat' and 'thin', Callimachus' prologic imagery creates the impression of a homosocial judgment of and traffic in female bodies, notwithstanding the instability, complications, and even self-undermining of the binaries it sets up. Just as in Aristophanes' *Frogs* the tragic poetry of Aeschylus and Euripides is literally weighed, in the *Aetia* prologue Callimachus judges Mimnermus and Philitas by introducing a scale through the verb καθέλκει ('it drags down', 9).[1] In this context, Mimnermus' 'big woman' (12)—an apparently dismissive reference to his *Nanno*, a composition named after a female lover—conveys not just a lack of 'sweetness' (Μίμνερμος ὅτι γλυκύς… /…..] ἡ μεγάλη δ' οὐκ ἐδίδαξε γυνή, 11f.) but also an excess of weight.[2] This aesthetic posturing has caused many, in antiquity and beyond, to read Callimachean programmatics as fetishizing the 'small' and the 'light' (τυτθόν, 5; ὀλίγη, 6; [ὀλ]ιγόστιχος, 9) in opposition to the 'big' and the 'heavy'—a binary that, like any other, breaks down at multiple levels. In 1996, the textual solidity of the binary was imperiled by the revelation that the antithesis to Mimnermus' 'big woman' created by the supplement universally accepted at the end of line 11 (αἱ κατὰ λεπτόν, 'slender compositions') was incompatible with the papyrological evidence—the surviving letter traces in the corresponding part of the commentary transmitted by P. Lit. Lond. 181 (= fr.1d Harder).[3] Additionally, μεγάλη is an epithet that is well suited for powerful and haughty goddesses, not just Athena, but also Demeter, the subject of Philitas' eponymous work, which is evoked in line 10 (ὄμπνια Θεσμοφόρος, 'the nourishing Lawgiver') as the positive counterpart, within his oeuvre, of Mimnermus' *Nanno*.[4] The implicit *leptotês* ('lightness, leanness, polish, finesse', etc.) of Philitas' *Demeter* cannot erase the ontological *megethos* of the goddess, even though

1. On the scale image, with its Aristophanic literary-critical connotations, see esp. Gargiulo (1992) and Hunter (2006), 126, who refers to the discussion of *embritheia* ('weight', 'gravity') in Philodemus *On Poems* 5 vii 25–32; see also Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2002), 246f., and Harder (2012), 38. For an account of the exegetical difficulties in lines 9–12 and, especially, the terms of the comparison between Philitas and Mimnermus, see D'Alessio (1996) *ad loc*. and Massimilla (1996), 206–13, whose interpretation I presuppose here; see also Harder (2012), 32–6.

2. 'That Mimnermus is sweet…"the big woman" did not show'. Massimilla (1996), 213, and Harder (2012), 43, simply observe that μεγάλη bears a 'negative' connotation, as often in Callimachus.

3. See Bastianini (1996). The supplement αἱ κατὰ λεπτόν printed by Pfeiffer (1949–53) was suggested by Rostagni (1928): see Benedetto (1990). What the letter traces seem to suggest is αἱ γ' ἁπ̣αλαί ('the soft [females]'), proposed by Luppe (1997) and accepted by Harder (2012): see Spanoudakis (2001), 439f., and below.

4. Hunter (2006), 121, points out that ὄμπνια—the adjective modifying Θεσμοφόρος—can mean 'well-fed' and 'large'. On μεγάλη as applied by Callimachus to Athena and Demeter, see, e.g., *Hymn* 5.19 and 6.121, and below. Callimachus thematizes Demeter's exceptional tallness, her resemblance to a 'high tree' (μέγα δένδρεον, 37). Hunter (2006), 121, aptly remarks that 'although μεγάλη…may be thought to draw some negative resonance from the context which follows it, we cannot simply assume that it is unremittingly pejorative in [line] 12.'



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it ostensibly devalues the concept as an aesthetic category. Furthermore, the idea of Hellenistic aesthetics as strictly devoted to *leptotês* has been reconsidered in light of the massive scale, grandeur, and even 'cosmic aspiration' of Alexandrian visual art in its various manifestations.[5] Yet, despite the reinscription of an excluded other, Callimachus' metapoetic language persistently exhibits a kind of fat-shaming.[6] In the poet's Hesiodic first-person account of his divine investiture, Apollo pushes him toward a *recusatio*—the 'original' one followed by many Roman (and later) examples:

> …….] …ἀοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον
> θρέψαι, τὴ]ν Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην
>
> (fr.1.23f. Harder)

> poet, feed the sacrificial animal, so that it becomes as fat as possible, but, my dear fellow, keep the Muse slender[7]

The most influential statement of rarefied Hellenistic poetics is enunciated through an assimilation of female corporeality to animal flesh, which instead of elevating the Muse to abstract intellectual heights implicitly reduces her to lean meat.[8] This treatment of divine femininity alerts us to an ethical danger of aesthetic materialism, even when it concerns the most ethereal symbols or figures and is colored with the ironical tinges of poetological self-fashioning. More to the point, this moment in the prologue could make us read the earlier reference to Mimnermus' 'big woman' (his ostensibly bad poetry) as concerning specifically female bodies, as drifting from the aesthetic categories of 'big' and 'weighty' into a pejorative notion of 'fat, corpulent', which commentators have downplayed by locating the wording in other semantic fields.[9] Besides the

5. See esp. Porter (2011), from which I borrow the phrase 'cosmic aspiration'. As Porter puts it, 288, 'The Hellenistic aesthetic is not one of simple refinement and smallness of scale. It produces sharply contrastive effects. At issue here is a *dynamic* of extremes, not a choice between them.' Mark Payne in Burt (2019) reinterprets *leptotês* as a lightness of (painterly) touch, which, following Barthes, he calls 'rareness'.

6. See also the epigrammatic fragment (398 Pfeiffer) where Antimachus's *Lyde* is called παχὺ γράμμα καὶ οὐ τορόν ('a fat work of writing, and not polished'). In the *Aetia* prologue, another poetological symbol disguised as a female figure may lurk in line 10 as a result of the phrase τὴν μακρήν, especially if in the initial lacuna one accepts the supplement γραῦν/γρηῦν ('old woman') or θεῦν ('goddess'): see Harder (2012), 39f. On the rhetoric of exclusion in Callimachus's *Hymn to Apollo*, see Bassi (1989).

7. Translation by Harder (2012).

8. Luppe's supplement αἱ γ' ἁπαλαί ('the soft [females]'), which, as we have seen (n.3), has been accepted at the end of line 9 of the *Aetia* prologue in the standard edition by Harder (2012), reinforces the sexist discourse, as it makes female flesh the site where the erotic and the culinary merge: see Telò (2018), 84–6; on ἁπαλός in this Callimachus passage and in literary-critical discourse, see also Hunter (2006), 120; Harder (2012) *ad loc*.; and Worman (2015), 118f.

9. Commenting most recently on fr.398 Pfeiffer, where Antimachus' *Lyde* is called a 'fat work of writing' (see n.6), Rawles (2019), 17, observes that παχύς, 'like English "thick"…can also mean



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poetic citations put on the scale, the image from Aristophanes' *Frogs* that becomes essential to understanding the Callimachean prologue is, therefore, that of an overweight *tragôidia*, whom, we are told, Euripides (the *leptos* tragedian) put on a diet after she was handed over to him by his predecessor, the excessive, heavy Aeschylus.[10] A similar transaction—a transfer of poetry, like a female *geras* ('prize'), from one male guardian or possessor to another—takes place through the homosocial relationship that Callimachus sets up in summoning his predecessors Mimnermus and Philitas.[11]

Aligned with Demeter Θεσμοφόρος (*Aet.* fr.1.10)—whose epithet makes her embody the Lacanian Law, the Name of the Father[12]—the 'thinness' emerging from the prologue's precarious binary logic functions as the defining attribute of an 'ideal-ego.'[13] Prompting identification, this ideal-ego subjects the poet's persona and, mimetically, its audience to a binding normativity (or 'ego-ideal'), to an internalized hierarchy of artistic perception, to a literary-critical 'distribution of the sensible', which is brought into being by Apollo's gesture of interpellation.[14] As I will show, however, if we fully attend to the complexities of Callimachean form, this thinness may appear, just like its marginalized opposite, to dissolve the very Law it seems to embody. As we will see, the coiling movement of Callimachean form, an alternation of plenitude and lack, expansion and contraction, set in motion by the Real of a bodily and

"stupid", and…sometimes seems to imply "florid, excessive" or "rough".' See, along similar lines, Krevans (1993); Asper (1997), 156–8; and Harder (2012), 61.

10. See Ar. *Ran.* 939–42 (Euripides speaking to Aeschylus): ἀλλ' ὡς παρέλαβον τὴν τέχνην παρὰ σοῦ τὸ πρῶτον εὐθὺς / οἰδοῦσαν ὑπὸ κομπασμάτων καὶ ῥημάτων ἐπαχθῶν, / ἴσχνανα μὲν πρώτιστον αὐτὴν καὶ τὸ βάρος ἀφεῖλον / ἐπυλλίοις καὶ περιπάτοις καὶ τευτλίοισι λευκοῖς ('as soon as I took over the tragic art from you, swollen by your pomposities and obese words, the first thing I did was to immediately slim her down and reduce her weight through little words, walks, and little white beets'). See Dover (1993) *ad loc.*; Harder (2012), 61, cites the Aristophanic passage as a parallel, without discussion. On the *leptos* Euripides, see Hunter (2009), 17–20, and Worman (2015), 118f.

11. This is the same homosocial atmosphere as in Catullus 86, where, as discussed by Papanghelis (1991), the aesthetic binary of the *Aetia* prologue is literalized in a beauty contest between Lesbia and *longa* Quintia. Occasionally, Papanghelis' language seems unconsciously to subscribe to Callimachean/Catullan homosocial sexism: 'With characteristic economy and wit, Callimachus aligns human anatomy and aesthetic doctrine: the woman is both large and voluminous' (381); 'despite the initial concessions on the poet's part, in the end Quintia's *magnum corpus* seems to be more of a liability than an asset.' (385f.) On the fetishism of thinness as a racist and sexist dynamic in the history of the United States, see esp. Strings (2019); on the ancient, Hippocratic origins of this attitude and its modern abuses, see Morales (2020), 20–46.

12. In his *Hymn to Demeter*, the goddess's establishment of agriculture—a primary figuration of the beginning of civilization—is cast as a violent 'cutting' (6.19f.), an apt image of the trauma that, according to Lacan (1994), marks the entrance into the Symbolic, a castrating subjection to the Law of the Father: see, e.g., 'The Three Forms of Object Lack'.

13. On the relation between 'ideal-ego' and 'ego-ideal', imaginary projection and symbolic introjection, see esp. Lacan (1991), 414.

14. On the idea of the 'distribution of the sensible' as the complex of normative sensory parameters that shape social hierarchy (or *consensus*), see, e.g., Rancière (2004), 7–46; I use 'interpellation' in the Althusserian sense of the call of ideology that makes the subject by subjecting it to normativity, that is, by objectifying it: see Althusser (1971), 163.



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temporal *ex-cess*, subverts the prologue's normative, 'fat-shaming', immortalizing aesthetics.[15]

After Apollo's 'interpellation', the metaphorics of 'weight' subtly continue through another articulation of the 'fat' vs. 'thin' binary in the poet's fantasy of shedding his old age as a melodious, dew-eating cicada:

ἐνι τοῖς γὰρ ἀείδομεν οἳ λιγὺν ἦχον
τέττιγος, θ]όρυβον δ' οὐκ ἐφίλησαν ὄνων.
θηρὶ μὲν οὐατόεντι πανείκελον ὀγκήσαιτο
ἄλλος, ἐγ]ὼ δ' εἴην οὐλ[α]χύς, ὁ πτερόεις,
ἆ πάντως, ἵνα γῆρας ἵνα δρόσον ἦν μὲν **ἀείδ**ω
πρώκιον ἐκ δίης ἠέρος **εἶδ**αρ **ἔδ**ων,
αὖθι τὸ δ' ἐκδύοιμι, τό μοι βάρος ὅσσον ἔπεστι
τρίγλ̣ωχιν̣ ὀλοῷ νῆσος ἐπ' Ἐγκελάδῳ.

(fr.1.29–36 Harder)

> …for we sing among those who love the shrill echo of the cicada, not the clamor of donkeys. Let somebody else bray completely like the eared beast, but may I be the light, winged one, ah, completely, so that as for old age, as for dew—may I sing the latter, eating flowing food from divine air, may I, in turn, shed the former, the burden that oppresses me, like a three-cornered island over Enceladus.[16]

Not just a question of opposite vocalities, the contrast between cicada and donkey allusively resumes the discourse of 'fleshiness' and 'thinness'.[17] The cicada's lightness (32) evokes the story, told in Plato's *Phaedrus* (259b–e), of the insect's former human nature. At the beginnings of the world, when the Muses appeared, the humans that would become cicadas 'were struck by the pleasure' (ἐξεπλάγησαν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς) of song. Enthralled by their own singing, they died of starvation, but were reborn as insects, which 'without hunger, without thirst, immediately sang' (ἄσιτόν τε καὶ ἄποτον εὐθὺς ᾄδειν).[18] 'Braying' phonically provides the second pole of the binary, for, besides contributing to the asinine sonorousness of lines 30 and 31, the verb ὀγκήσαιτο punningly

15. On the Lacanian Real, see, e.g., Žižek (1993), 35: 'The Real designates a substantial hard kernel that…resists symbolization and, simultaneously, it designates the left-over, which is posited or "produced" by symbolization itself.'

16. My translation. In line 34 I accept πρώκιον, differently from Harder (2012): see below.

17. The opposition is highlighted by the chiastic construction in lines 30–2 (cicada/donkey; donkey/cicada), which is noted by Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2002), 244.

18. For the various symbolic associations of the cicada, see the materials collected in Harder (2012), 70f.; see also Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2012), 36–9 (in a chapter on the relationship between the prologue and Plato). On the Platonic passage, see Egan (2004); Yunis (2011), 175–7; LeVen (2018), 216–19; and esp. Nooter (2020), 10, who suggests that the *Phaedrus* 'configure[s] cicadas as ongoing, fourth-level lifeforms.'



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conveys the corporeal heaviness of the aesthetic category of turgidity, ὄγκος ('swelling').[19]

I want to suggest that a para-etymological pun—evoking the connection between cicadas and starvation—may be activated in these lines by the verb ἀείδω. In the middle of the *Hymn to Apollo*, Callimachus playfully extrapolates from the phonemic texture of the god's own name an onomastic multiplicity, a kind of plural singularity, enacted through the repetition of forms of πολύς ('much, many') at the edges of the line:

> **ὦπολλον**, **πολλοί** σε Βοηδρόμιον καλέουσι
> **πολλοὶ** δὲ Κλάριον, πάντῃ δὲ τοι οὔνομα **πουλύ**
> (*Hymn to Apollo* 69f.)

> *O A-pollo*, *many* call you Helper, and *many* Clarius, and everywhere you have *many* a name.

As a result of the conflation of ὦ and Ἄπολλον, the invocation to Apollo (ὦ-πολλον) turns into an invocation to 'Much' (-πολλόν), the adjective that draws a virtual triangle in the formal configuration of the two lines—with πολλοί in 69 as the apex and πολλοί and πουλύ in 70 as the base angles. These lines read as a virtuoso expansion on the reconfiguration of Apollo's name into πολλόν and ὦ, which becomes a semantic constituent (the vocative article ὦ), signaling his propensity to be called or addressed—in multiple ways, as it were.[20] In the *Aetia* prologue, the endings of lines 33 and 34, marked respectively by ἀείδω and the Homeric *figura etymologica* εἶδαρ ἔδων ('eating food'),[21] suggest a similar para-etymological dynamic, which can be viewed as a (parodic?) intervention in the ancient debate on the origins of ἀείδω, ἀοιδός, ᾠδή.[22] Specifically, we are invited to read ἀείδω as ἀ-είδω, with the initial letter functioning as an alpha privative, which codes 'singing' as an antonym of ἔδω, that is to say, as

19. See Hopkinson (1988) *ad* 31; Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004), 72; Steiner (2007), 199–203; and Harder (2012), 72f. On the abundance of asinine *o* sounds, see Livrea (1996). For Ambühl (1995), Callimachus's rejection of the donkey amounts to a rejection of Dionysiac, 'manic' poetry; cf. Hunter (1989).

20. Williams (1978) *ad loc*. notes 'the combination of anaphora, polyptoton, and etymological pun in the sequence Ἄπολλων…ὦπολλον πολλοί…πολλοί…πουλύ.'

21. εἶδαρ is an alternative form of ἔδαρ from the Indo-European root $*h_1ed$-.

22. Kaesser (2004), 40, argues that, in the prologue, ἀοιδός and ἀοιδή are para-etymologically reinvented not just for playful reasons, but to '[assign] new meaning to ἀοιδή when its traditional point of reference has become obsolete in poetry that is no longer sung but written'. (On the meaning of ἀοιδός in archaic Greece, see Maslov [2009]). For Kaesser, a link would emerge between ἀοιδός/ἀοιδή and ἀηδών (see below), but ἀοιδός would also signify 'lack of swelling' (ἀ-οἰδέω) or 'lack of knowledge' (ἀ-οἶδα)—the latter suggestion is already in Hardie (2000), 168. The para-etymological play I propose is an effect of a reading that, differently from Kaesser's ἀ-οἰδέω ('non-swelling'), does not reinforce the poetological binary, but destabilizes it. The most common Latin counterpart of ἀείδω, *cano*, generates multiple para-etymological, punning *metaformations*, as shown by Ahl (1985), 31–5.



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a deprivation of eating, a kind of (self-imposed) starvation or, more precisely, bulimia.[23] The object of ἀείδω in line 33 is δρόσον ('dew')—the latter item (ἦν μέν) in the pair of nouns joined by the repeated conjunction ἵνα (ἵνα γῆρας ἵνα δρόσον); in line 34, the apparently indeterminate εἶδαρ that Callimachus' mouth draws from 'divine air' is—especially if we accept, with Pfeiffer, the emendation of πρώκιον—nothing else but dew itself.[24] Even if one interprets the accusative governed by ἀείδω as adverbial in force ('so that I may sing in a dewy fashion'),[25] the imagistic effect is of dew ingested and then ejected in the act of singing—an undoing of eating visualized on the page by ἀ-είδω and ἔδων at the ends of consecutive lines (fr.1.33f.).[26] On the threshold of materiality and immateriality, dew is ethereal fare, the light nourishment in the metamorphic fantasy of becoming cicada. But the sequence ἀ-είδω…ἔδων—the former preemptively negating the latter—conjures a looping rhythm of filling–emptying, something different from a mere poetic transfiguration through airy nectar.[27] Para-etymologically, singing entails an undoing of ingestion; as an emetic discharge, it is homologous to the ejection expressed by ἐκ-δύοιμι ('[so that]…I may shed'), whose object, γῆρας ('old age'), encompasses not just '[old] skin', but also, as a result of the gloss τὸ βάρος, 'weight, fat' (fr.1.33–5).[28]

This par-(a)edi-(m)ological game prompts us to consider the cicada as a symbol not of poetic immortality, but rather of an aesthetic death drive, which is enacted in the biographical anecdotes on Philitas, a poet who was Callimachean

23. It bears remarking that in all the Homeric occurrences of the phrase εἶδαρ ἔδειν there is a concomitant idea of *sterêsis*, which could be read as negating, in various fashions, the eating act. In the *Iliad* (παρὰ δ' ἀμβρόσιον βάλεν εἶδαρ / ἔδμεναι· ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶ πέδας ἔβαλε χρυσείας / ἀρρήκτους ἀλύτους, 13.35–7) and the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (ἄμβροτον εἶδαρ ἔδουσαι, 260), the food described is 'ambrosia', the divine substance that is a privation of mortality (**n̥-mr̥-tos*). In the Iliadic passage the alpha privative in ἀμ-βρόσιον proliferates through the compounds ἀρ-ρήκτους ('*un*-breakable') and ἀ-λύτους ('*un*-loosened'), both modifying πέδας, the noun parallel to εἶδαρ (the two nouns are governed by βάλεν/ἔβαλεν). If prefixed to εἶδαρ in a game of phonetic recombination, the alpha privatives that surround this word would materialize ἀ-ειδ-. In the *Odyssey*, the mysterious people in the land that Odysseus will reach in his post-Odyssean life eat '*un*-salted' food (οὐδέ θ' ἅλεσσι μεμιγμένον εἶδαρ ἔδουσιν, 11.123 = 23.270). Also in the *Odyssey*, the 'flowery' fare of the lotus eaters (ἄνθινον εἶδαρ ἔδουσιν, 9.84) induces 'forgetfulness' (νόστου…λαθέσθαι, 97; νόστοιο λαθέσθαι, 102).

24. See Massimilla (1996), 226, on the difficulties of the transmitted reading προίκιον ('free of charge') and arguments in favor of the emendation πρώκιον ('dewy') suggested by Stanley and Ahrens on the basis of Theocr. 4.16: μὴ πρῶκας σιτίζεται ὥσπερ ὁ τέττιξ; ('Does she [the calf] eat dew like a cicada?')

25. See Harder (2012), 77.

26. Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2002) have illustrated other subtleties of the phonic texture of the prologue.

27. The complex syntax of lines 33–5 also seems to delineate a kind of formal loop, see esp. ἵνα γῆρας ἵνα δρόσον (fr.1.33); Hunter (1989), 2, notes that this syntax is 'amusingly suggestive of the ecstatic, "possessed" mode which Socrates ascribes to poets' in Plato's *Ion.*

28. The word βάρος occurs in the passage from *Frogs* where Euripides declares that he 'put tragedy on a diet': ἴσχνανα μὲν πρώτιστον αὐτὴν καὶ τὸ βάρος ἀφεῖλον (941). See n.10. On the phrase γῆρας ἐκδύειν as 'shedding skin', see King (1986), 26, and Borgogno (2001).



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before Callimachus. The standard reading of the cicada symbolism is summarized by Gregory Crane:

> [Callimachus] wishes that he might shuffle off old age, and, like a *tettix*, that he might sing, living simply on dew… [He] wishes that he might pass beyond his frail, human existence into one wholly dedicated to song… The form of a cicada recalls…the decrepitude that has overtaken Tithonus. Cold and bloodless, the image of old age, the cicada may no longer need mortal food or suffer from the discomfort of human *gêras*, but it also enjoys none of the pleasures that *hêbê* offers to the mortal… The cold, desiccated, but ever songful, existence of the cicada sets Callimachus apart from more conventional aspirations of his model… [He] wishes for a cold, austere fate, beyond physical pleasure and wholly consumed with song.[29]

The ingestive/emetic back and forth in the punning alternation of ἀ-είδω and ἔδων perversely roughens the poetic texture, enabling a different understanding of the affect 'beyond physical pleasure' disseminated by the image of the cicada. The transformation of the cicada into pure sound, a disembodied intensity, connects Callimachus with Sappho, who, in the recently discovered Old Age poem, compares herself to Tithonus to envision her survival through song.[30] But the poetic becoming cicada may also be connected with Philitas of Cos, whose proto-Callimachean *leptotês* has been turned into literal, moribund thinness in the biographical tradition.[31] Athenaeus presents Philitas as engaged in a desperate 'search' (*zêtêsis*) for 'truth' or 'linguistic accuracy' that reduced him to 'thinness' (*ischnotês*), and subjected him to *dialusis*, a state of exhaustion or dissolution in which he was liable to be uprooted and swept off by the wind like a frail tree.[32]

29. Crane (1986), 272–5.

30. On the 'new' Sappho, see Gronewald and Daniel (2004) and, in general, the essays in Greene and Skinner (2009). Geissler (2005) makes the plausible inference that Callimachus draws the metapoetic use of Tithonus from Sappho; see also Livrea (2007), 78f., and Janko (2017), esp. 287f. Connecting Sappho's fragment with Plato's myth of the cicadas, duBois (2011), 669, observes that this animal transformation 'preserves the notion of the persistence of the voice in a body that gradually disappears from around it' and that 'this is a compelling figure for poetry, especially lyric poetry, the voice overheard, the voice brought back to life'; see Kurke (2021). Considering the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite,* an important intertext of Sappho's poem, Nooter (2020), 140, observes that 'Tithonus acts as an originator of white noise, whose sounds mostly fade in and out of human consciousness.'

31. See esp. Bing (2003), following Calderón Dorda (1990); cf. Cameron (1991), followed, to a degree, by Sbardella (2000), 15, who takes the biographical anecdotes at face value. However, aside from the extensive evidence of aesthetic characterizations turned into physical attributes by biographical sources, the connection of Philitas' thinness with his poetic *leptotês* is strongly suggested by the use of the cognate verb *leptunô* for thinning down induced by lovesickness in Theocritus: καὶ ταῦτ' ἄμαρ ἐπ' ἄμαρ ὁρεῦσά με λεπτύνοντα ('even though she sees that I am getting thinner day after day', 11.69; where λεπτύνοντα, 'thinning down', is Meineke's widely accepted emendation of the transmitted reading λεπτὸν ὄντα, an obvious banalization).

32. See Athenaeus 9.401e (= Philitas T7 Sbardella), where the outcome of the frantic search of Philitas is described as διαλυθῆναι. On other similar testimonia and, in particular, on their reference



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In a fragment of Hermesianax, Philitas—the icon of the *dicti studiosus* poet, who wrote the lexicographical work Ἄτακτοι Γλῶσσαι (*Scattered Glosses*), or, alternatively, Ἄτακτα—is described as 'toiling over every word and every speech' (περὶ πάντα Φιλίταν / ῥήματα καὶ πᾶσαν τρύομενον λαλιήν, fr.7.77f. Powell).[33] This behavior suggests that underneath *philology* (φιλο-λογία) there is erotic desire, the *feel*ing of longing inherent in the idea of *philia*, 'love', but also something like addiction.[34] In the juxtaposition of the participle τρυόμενον ('wearing himself out')—corresponding to the Latin *tritum*—with the repetition of πάντα…πᾶσαν, we can perceive a perverse rhythm of fullness and emptiness, an embodied sense of ever-increasing lack provoked by the yearning for wholeness, for linguistic and epistemological plenitude.[35] The 'aroundness' (περί) of this serial rhythm assimilates it to the circuitous, futile *jouissance* that, according to Lacan, constitutes the death drive, a restless stuckness or mobile immobility inherent in the alienated condition of the subject.[36] This notion of circuitous enjoyment recasts the Freudian death drive, that is, the rush to non-existence that, as Freud theorized in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, animates life from its inception.[37] The death drive of Philitas—a pioneer of the Hellenistic 'archaeology' expressed in the Mouseion and the Library at Alexandria—can also be called *archive fever*. This is the phrase (*mal d'archive*) that Derrida, in a programmatic

to Philitas' search for (and fight against) a figure identified as *Pseudo-logos*, which may well indicate linguistic usage not supported by the tradition: see Dettori (2000a); Sbardella (2000), 14–16 and 77–9; and Spanoudakis (2002), 347–92; see also Pfeiffer (1968), 88–92, and Cameron (1995), 490f. On *leptosunê* as the disease of the bookworm, see n.34.

33. On the textual problems of this line, see esp. Dettori (2000a), 14–17.

34. On Philitas' philological, lexicographical methods as shaped by 'scientific' pragmatics, see Dettori (2000b); these pragmatics cannot be dissociated from neurotic cathexis. On punning games of Philitas' name with φιλία, see Spanoudakis (2002), 22 n.6, and Whitmarsh (2005). For the use of the prefix φιλο- to indicate addiction, see Telò (2016), 62f. In Ennius' famous description of Naevius as *dicti studiosus* (*Ann.* fr.5.4 Skutsch)—a translation of φιλό-λογος—the suffix *-osus* conveys an over-attachment, a compulsive passion. On philology as 'an affective relationship… with language', see Hamacher (2010), 110; see also Bernstein (2019) (on philology as *philia*). On the language of desire in German classical philology, see Güthenke (2020), 21–47. According to Nisbet (2003), excessive devotion to reading or intellectual activity—what he calls 'the sickness of discourse'—is the cause of the moribund 'thinness' (*leptosunê*) that, in a series of scoptic epigrams (*AP* 11.90–111), is said to have enfeebled men and, in one case, a woman so deeply that they hanged themselves.

35. Hermesianax's emphasis on πάντα may also point to the fact that Philitas' lexicography 'takes for its text not merely Homer but the *totality* of the language' (Bing [2003], 337, my italics). This (impossible) notion of an all-encompassing linguistic archive is also strongly Callimachean, as noted, e.g., by Selden (1998), 374, whose language resembles Hermesianax's description of Philitas: Callimachus' texts exhibit features that 'have been culled from *every* dialect and genre…from *every* stage of the language's historical development, and foreign sources' (my italics).

36. See Lacan (1981), 178, 182; for Žižek (2006), 63, 'we become "humans" when we get caught in a closed, self-propelling loop of repeating the same gesture and finding satisfaction in it'. On the philologist's relation with the textual object as the Lacanian *objet petit a*, see Gumbrecht (2003), 20f. The assimilation of Philitas to a parrot, the bird of endless repetition, that Caspers (2005) sees in Hermesianax's fragment reinforces the idea that the death drive may energize the grammatical practice of Callimachus' predecessor.

37. Freud (1920), esp. 36, 38f., and 41.



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Freudian framework, coined for 'a compulsive, repetitive…desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin…to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.'[38] Philitas' lexicographic title Ἄτακτοι Γλῶσσαι suggests the an-*arch*ivic forces of disarray, disorder, and dissemination unleashed by the feverish, death-driven energy that feeds the fundamental aspiration of the *arch*ive, that is to say, a consignation (or gathering together)[39]—in this case, of signifiers and *all* their possible signifieds.[40] The circuit of archival assembling and an-archivic disassembling is homologous to the loop of aspirational plenitude and corporeal emptiness delineated in Hermesianax's portrait of Philitas, but also to the quasi-simultaneity of 'eating' and 'non-eating' (εἶδαρ ἔδων / ἀ-είδω) that, in Callimachus' *Aetia* prologue, is implicated with his becoming cicada, his metamorphosis into pure sound. In other words, when we read of Callimachus' imagining the 'ever songful existence of the cicada',[41] we should heed the full implications of '*ever*-ness'. There is a glimmer of this 'everness' in Theocritus' *Thalisians*, the poem where Philitas is likened, for his poetic voice, to a 'grasshopper' (ἀκρ-ίδας, *Id.* 7.41), whose name resonates with *arch-ê* and *archê-tas*.[42] Here the speaking voice describes 'soot-colored cicadas' (αἰθαλίωνες / τέττιγες, 138f.), which 'on shady sprigs *toiled warbling*' (λαλαγεῦντες ἔχον πόνον, 139). In the aesthetic toil that generates

38. Derrida (1996), 91. On Callimachus' 'pervasive preoccupation with problems of origin', exemplified by the very title of the *Aetia*, see, esp., Selden (1998), 319f., 376, and 408. Aetiology, an expression of Hellenistic archive fever, can be interpreted as motivated by an 'an awareness of the enormous gulf separating past and present, and the desire to bridge it' (Bing [1988], 71), or by the wish to gather 'a vast compendium of different, independent local traditions…a heteronomy of individual cults, beliefs, and rites' (Selden [1998], 358), or by a collector's passion, as suggested by Krevans (2011), 132f. On the Museion and Library at Alexandria as monumental archives, see Polignac (2000) and B. Butler (2001). '*Arch*aeology' and '*arch*ive' are terms applied to the philological and heavily intertextual dimension of Hellenistic poetry: see, e.g., Hunter (1996), Fassino and Prauscello (2001), Mori (2017), and Park (2021).

39. Derrida (1996), 3, 11f.: '*Consignation* aims to coordinate a single corpus', but 'if there is no archive without consignation in an *external place* which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction…, then we must also remember that repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the death drive.' For Gunderson (2018), 211, the works of ancient grammarians exemplify *différance*, the 'deconstruction of *logos*', through an overlap of 'incompleteness' and 'over-completeness'. The 'spacing' of *différance* that occurs in the gaps between signifiers and referents makes every reproduction of the past impossible and, consequently, destines the archive to failure: see Earlie (2015).

40. Pfeiffer (1968), 90, thought of Philitas' title as informing Politian's *Miscellanea*, that is, as an indication that his Ἄτακτοι Γλῶσσαι constituted 'various learned writings put together without proper arrangement.' According to Bing (2003), 338, however, this title programmatically displays Philitas' passion for semantic 'unruliness', for a kind of lexicography interested in 'semantic deviation or dissonance'.

41. Nooter (2020), 134, refers to the cicadas' 'existence-without-event', which produces 'a heightened hum of animation'.

42. In this passage, Simichidas self-deprecatingly compares himself and Philitas to a frog and to grasshoppers respectively (βάτραχος δὲ ποτ' ἀκρίδας ὥς τις ἐρίσδω, *Id.* 7.41): see Hunter (1999), 162f. On the assimilation of ἀκρίδες to τέττιγες in Meleager, see Borthwick (1966), 103f. The sounds of ***arch****-ê* that we find in both *bat-**rach**-os* and ***akr****-idas* are also detectable in the physical description of Simichidas' interlocutor, the rustic Lycidas: δασύτ**ριχ**ος…τ**ράγ**οιο /…**ῥοικὰ**ν… **ἀγρ**ιελαίω ('[skin] of a thick-haired goat…a crooked [staff] of wild olive', 7.15–18). As Bowie (1985) argues, we are primed to see Lycidas as a figure of Philitas himself.



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the phonic 'everness' of the cicadas' reduplicative rhythm (*la-lageuntes*) we may perceive a fixation, the death drive's *jouissance* in repetition, which can manifest itself in an excess of and exit from language (like a stutter)—what Lacan uncannily calls *lalangue*.[43]

In Callimachus' prologue, the cicadas' sound is conveyed by ἦχον (29) at the end of the line, which connects with the alternating rhythm of fullness and emptiness conjured by the proximity of ἀείδω (33) and ἔδων (34), in the same position. In Ovid's narrative, Echo, the mountain nymph conjured by ἦχον, starves herself while bound to Narcissus in a bulimic dynamic—continually ingesting his words in order to regurgitate them through echoey repetition.[44] When she becomes pure sound, the eponymous physical phenomenon, she continues to nourish and deplete herself, at once preserving and mutilating, productively extending the lives of voices through a fundamentally impossible reproduction, a failed repetition, that is a kind of death.[45] The regurgitation–

43. See Lacan (1998), 44, 138f., on *lalangue*, which he defines as the language of the unconscious; the translator Fink (44 n.15) observes that this is a term that Lacan creates 'simply by putting together the feminine article *la* with the noun *langue*' and that Lacan intends to capture 'the level at which an infant…may endlessly repeat one syllable of a word…the level at which language may "stutter".' As Moncayo (2017), 27, observes, '*Lalangue* refers…to the alliterations and obliterations of language that circle around the *objet a* as object of the drive, and the object cause of desire.' S. Butler (2013), 199, notes that the neologism 'plays on the Greek verb *lalein*' and 'echoes, narcissistically, Lacan's own name'. The English phrase *La-La Land*, which Merriam-Webster defines as 'a euphoric, dreamlike mental state detached from the harsher realities of life', can be seen as expressing something like the *jouissance* of *lalangue*, the sense of 'time out of joint' (cf. Edelman [2011]). J. Butler (1990), 274f., connects the death drive with what she calls 'the stutter of desire'. Vergil's imitation of the Theocritean line in *Ecl.* 2.13 (*sole sub ardenti resonant arbusta cicadis*, 'under the burning sun, the bushes resound with the cicadas') does not simply render λαλαγεῦντες with *resonant*, but reproduces the reduplication of Theocritus *lala(n)ge* with a marked double alliteration (*sole sub ardenti… arbusta*).

44. See Ov. *Met*. 3.380–4: *'ecquis adest?' et 'adest' **re**sponderat Echo / … / uoce 'ueni' magna clamat: uocat illa uocantem. / **re**spicit et **rursus** nullo ueniente 'quid' inquit / 'me fugis?' et totidem, quot dixit, uerba **re**cepit*. ('"Is anyone here?" and "here", Echo had responded…with a big voice he shouts "Come": she calls him while he is calling her. He looks back and, since nobody comes, he says again: "Why are escaping from me?" and he hears back all the words he said.') See also *Met*. 3.396–8 (on Echo's self-starvation): 'Her sleepless worries wear out her wretched body and wrinkles constrict her skin and the juice of the whole body is dispersed in air (*in aera*); only voice and bones are left.' On Echo's ingurgitation of the other, see Derrida (1997), 15f., and DeArmitt (2014), 130, 133.

45. See Telò (2020), ch.3; see also Enterline (2000), 57f.; Hardie (2002), 165; and Janan (2009), 138. In the final couplet of Callimachus's famous epigram 28 (ἐχθαίρω τὸ ποίημα τὸ κυκλικόν, 'I hate the cyclic poem'), the mutilation of Echo is punningly captured by the vocalic shift from the long ē (Ἠχώ) to the short one of the form ἔχει, which expresses erotic possession in this address to a potential lover (*Ep*. 28.5f.): 'Lysanias (Λυσανίη), you are, yes (ναιχί), beautiful, beautiful (καλὸς καλός), but before one can say this clearly, some Echo (Ἠχώ) says: "Another has (ἔχει) him."' An anonymous other's possession coincides with the speaking voice's lack, with his own reenactment of Echo's travails through the phonic loop of Ἠχώ and ἔχω, through the mutilation of vocalic shortening. Deprivation is constantly reinscribed, as shown by the echoey resonance ναιχί / ἔχει and its multiple effects of gain and loss: 'yes' (ναιχί) can be construed as an expanded ἔχει (the verb plus an initial extra letter); ἔχει ('the possession') as a form of graphemic mutilation; on the other hand, evoking the negative prefix νη- (as in νήιδες in the *Aetia* prologue), the 'expansion' ναιχί amounts to a curtailed possession. In line with this epigram's discursive self-alienation (see Fitzgerald [1996], 48), the loop reinscribes the 'cycle' excluded in the initial line, enacting it in the



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ingestion suggested by ἀ-είδω / ἔδων turns the apparently unmarked ἦχον into an echo of Echo, inviting the reader to overlay her *lifedeath*, a rem(a)inder of her erotic troubles, onto the shrill voice of the cicadas.[46]

A similar dynamic of *lifedeath* resonates in the conclusion of a Callimachean epigram where we find a drawing together of the 'nightingale' (ἀηδών), the doppelgänger of the 'poet' (ἀοιδός), and 'Hades' (Ἀίδης):

> ἀλλὰ σὺ μέν που,
> ξεῖν' Ἁλικαρνησεῦ, τετρ**άπαλαι** σποδιή·
> αἱ δὲ τεαὶ ζώουσιν **ἀηδόνες**, ἦσιν ὁ πάντων
> ἁρπακτὴς **Ἀΐδης** οὐκ ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλεῖ.
>
> (*AP* 7.80.3–6 = *HE* 1205–8)

> but you somewhere, friend from Halicarnassus, you are four-times-old ashes. But your nightingales will live, on which Hades, who snatches away everybody, will not cast his hand.

Speaking to his dead friend, Heraclitus, Callimachus plays with the conventions of funerary epigram—as Richard Hunter observes, there is no tomb, no corpse, no passers-by.[47] Though Hunter and MacQueen have pointed to tensions permeating these lines, there remains potential for further reading. Observing that ἁρπακτής is meant to evoke the *harpê*, 'a bird of prey which…was known for attacking other birds', Hunter has suggested that this reference to a version of the hawk —the rapacious enemy of the poet-like nightingale in Hesiod—'darkens the apparent confidence of Callimachus' final assertion', and upsets the very topos of poetic immortality it seems to affirm.[48] Before Hunter, MacQueen noted an affinity between the apparent opposites of Hades and the nightingale, between the former's invisibility and the nightingale's tendency to 'raise [its] voice in song after dark.'[49] The containment of Ἀίδης ('Hades') in ἀηδόνες ('nightingales') conveys more than the sense that poetic immortality is always haunted by death. The occurrence of ἀηδόνες in the hexameter and Ἀίδης in the pentameter—a mutilated form in a programmatically curtailed line[50]—gives the impression that Callimachus' epigrammatic self is caught in the cadence of *lifedeath*, in an unceasing *fort–da* circuit of acquisition and loss, which resembles the formal

frustrated repetition of καλὸς καλός, which belies the name of the *erômenos*, Lysanias ('Loosener of travails'). On other echoey effects in the epigram, see esp. Palumbo Stracca (1988), Edwards (2002), and Boegehold (2004).

46. I borrow the portmanteau word *lifedeath* from Derrida (2019), who uses it to conceptualize the idea, at the center of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, of life as tending toward non-existence.

47. Hunter (1992).

48. Hunter (1992), 122.

49. MacQueen (1982), 52.

50. See Oliensis (2019), 154–8, on the elegiac pentameter as a 'castrated' version of the hexameter.



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alternation of ἀείδω / ἔδων in the prologue of the *Aetia*. In the epigram, the adverb preceding the evocation of the nightingales, τετράπαλαι, is attracted into the grammatical territory of a feminine plural noun by the article αἱ in line 5, inviting us to contemplate the possibility of a compound τετρ-απαλαί ('four-times-tender') besides τετρα-πάλαι and to detect the vaguely sexualized image of 'soft, tender' ἀηδόνες. The incomplete phrase αἱ γ' ἁ̣παλαί [('the tender [females]') in the *Aetia* prologue describes the notionally positive counterpart of Mimnermus' 'big woman', the ally, in the text's economy of opposites, of the sweet nightingales (*Aet*. fr.1.16) contrasted with vociferous cranes (14).[51] But just as ἀηδόνες is caught in the loop of poetic immortality and Hades, in a co-existence of survival and destruction (the 'cinder', σποδιή, *AP* 7.80.4),[52] ἁπαλαί seems to delineate, through the privative force of the initial alpha, a *fort–da* of 'tender youth' (possessing a lack: ἀ + παλαί) and 'dry old age' (deprived of a lack: πάλαι - ἀ), of tactile presence and material dispersion, which Echo experienced herself and provided to others after her metamorphosis.[53] Hades, nightingale, and poet, but also eating and non-eating, seem to converge at the very beginning of the *Aetia* prologue in the adjective νήιδες ('ignorant'), which is applied to the Telchines: Τελχῖνες ἐπιτρύζουσιν ἀοιδῇ, / νήιδες ('the Telchines croak against the song, ignorant', 1f.). The opposition between ἀοιδῇ and νήιδες, strengthened by the enjambment, is also disrupted by the possibility of (mis)reading them as equivalent formations: a negative prefix (ἀ-/νη-) and the root of 'seeing'/'knowing' (ἰδ-/οἰδ-), as with Ἅιδης ('the Invisible') and ἀοιδός, kin to the nightingale. [54] In νήιδες we can indeed spot Hades (Ἅιδης) and the denial or erasure of death, not so much poetic immortality as a bulimic loop, a simultaneity of eating *and* non-eating (ἐδ-/νη-[ε]δ-), something like the mobile stuckness of the cicada's sound.

This stuckness also informs the aesthetic feel of Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*, where starvation, thematized through Erysichthon and Demeter herself, brings forth uncanny formal entanglements of privation and accumulation. In the hymn, we find the 'great goddess' (μεγάλα θεός, 121) starving herself and, thereby, anticipating the experience she will inflict upon her enemy Erysichthon, just as the characterization of agriculture, Demeter's contribution to 'civilization', as violent 'cutting' (ἀπέκοψε, 20), anticipates his destruction of the sacred grove.[55] At the beginning, a striking interlinear

51. *Aet*. fr.1.16: ἁ̣η[δονίδες] δ' ὧδε μελιχρ[ό]τεραι ('the little nightingales are thus sweeter'). On the possibility that the tactile adjective ἁπαλαί may modify 'young women', see n.8.

52. On the cinder as 'what remains without remaining…from the incineration', see Derrida (2014), 25.

53. On Echo as 'pure voice', a kind of glimmering presence beyond language, see S. Butler (2015), 79–82; on Echo as a figure of *lalangue*, see Janan (2009), 138, and S. Butler (2013), 199.

54. See Kaesser (2004), 40f., who considers the possible play between ἀοιδός and οἶδα in the *Aetia* prologue. On the various insulting connotations of νήιδες, see Magnelli (1999).

55. On Erysichthon's ecological violence, see Da Silva (2008); on the mapping of violence against the environment onto abuse of women in the Ovidian version of the myth, see Morales (2020), 78–82.



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resonance sets up a connection between 'non-eating' and 'ignorance'—the same para-etymological convergence activated by νήιδες (*Aet*. fr.1.2):

> μηδ' ὅκ' ἀφ' αὐαλέων στομάτων **πτύωμες ἄπαστοι**.
> Ἔσπερος ἐκ νεφέων ἐσκέψατο πανίκα νεῖται;
> Ἔσπερος, ὅς τε πιεῖν Δαμάτερα μῶνος ἔπεισεν
> ἁρπαγίμας ὅκ' **ἄπυστα** μετέστιχεν ἴχνια κώρας.
> (*Hymn to Demeter* 6–9)

> …not even when we [initiates] spit with our dry mouths, having fasted. Hesperus peeked out from the clouds—when will he come? Hesperus, who was the only one to persuade Demeter to drink, when she followed the unknown footsteps of the kidnapped daughter.

The adjective ἄπυστα ('unknown') resumes ἄπαστοι ('fasting'), which differs in only one letter (ἄπυστος/ἄπαστος), while, in a sense, incorporating πτύωμες ('we spit'). The oral dryness of Demeter's fasting initiates, addressed by the narrating voice, previews—and reperforms—her own fasting, whose a-temporality (or excessive temporality) is reflected in the non-chronic time of her incessant wandering nowhere.[56] The unknowability, or 'illocality',[57] of her destination—the fantasized endpoint of a trauma—generates a going in circles that exhausts and dehydrates the body, denying any form of release or discharge (which, in a sense, spitting is). We feel we are going in circles when we read the two lines that separate ἄπαστοι from ἄπυστα—in each of them, in the same metrical positions, the mention of Hesperus is followed by a circling back of sound: **νε**φέων…**νε**ῖται (7); **πιε**ῖν…ἔ**πει**σεν (8). The formal effects that materialize the homology of Demeter's fasting and futile quest are heightened by games of compulsive triangulation in these lines:

> οὐ πίες οὔτ' ἄρ' ἔδες τῆνον χρόνον οὐδὲ λοέσσα.
> τρὶς μὲν δὴ διέβας Ἀχελῷον ἀργυροδίναν,
> τοσσάκι δ' ἀενάων ποταμῶν ἐπέρασας ἕκαστον,
> τρὶς δ' ἐπὶ Καλλιχόρῳ χαμάδις ἐκαθίσσαο φρητί
> αὐσταλέα ἄποτός τε καὶ οὐ φάγες οὐδὲ λοέσσα.
> (*Hymn to Demeter* 12–16)

> At that time you didn't drink nor did you eat nor did you wash yourself. Three times you crossed the silver-flowing Achelous; as many times you traversed each of the eternal rivers; three times at the Callichorus well you

56. Demeter's fasting is a popular motif in Hellenistic poetry, see Faulkner (2011); on its treatment in the eponymous Homeric hymn, see Bing (1996).

57. I borrow the term 'illocality' from Derrida (2000), 15.



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> sat on the ground dry, without having drunk, and you did not eat nor did you wash yourself.

Through the tripling of negatives in lines 12 and 16, starvation is fashioned as an accumulation, a piling up of emptiness and void—like the piling up of Demeter's vain steps in her desperate maternal journey. The refrain in lines 12 and 16—a formal rendering of the duration of Demeter's hunger strike—bookends three lines, all beginning with references to thrice performed actions (τρὶς…τοσσάκι…τρίς). The sequences of three negatives (οὐ…οὔτ'…οὐδέ, 12; ἄ-ποτός…οὐ…οὐδέ, 16) create a horizontal pattern of triple repetition, parallel to the vertical one, which tracks her peregrinations. The outcome of these tenacious formal arrangements is a regimented web of intersecting fixations: starvation as a self-hollowing march, and the maternal search as a restless self-depletion. At the end of the hymn, when the occasional frame resumes after the mythological parenthesis, plenitude can no longer be distinguished from privation:

> ὡς δ' **ἀ-πεδίλωτοι** καὶ **ἀν-άμπυκες** ἄστυ πατεῦμες,
> ὣς πόδας, ὣς κεφαλὰς **παν-**απηρέας ἕξομες αἰεί.
> ὡς δ' αἱ λικνοφόροι χρυσῶ **πλέα** λίκνα φέροντι,
> ὣς ἁμὲς τὸν χρυσὸν **ἀ-**φειδέα πασεύμεσθα.
>
> (*Hymn to Demeter* 124–7)

> And just as we walk through the city without shoes and without wreaths, thus feet, thus heads fully lacking deprivations are what we will always have. Just as the cradle-bearing women bring cradles full of gold, thus we will obtain unsparing gold.

The lack of shoes and wreaths, the initiates' final tribute to the goddess, reenacts her own bodily lacks (ἄπαστοι…ἄποτος, 6, 16), promising the plenitude of heads that are παν-α-πηρέας ('fully lacking deprivations'), a Callimachean *hapax* confusing opposites through the chain of reversals emerging from its successive parts. In the second couplet, plenitude is, again, the effect of a double mutilation, as it were, of privations canceling each other out (ἀ-φειδέα, 'unsparing').

I now want to read a climactic moment of the Callimachean hymn's account of Erysichthon's frantic hunger in the framework of plenitude as privation, looking at how 'singing' flickers as a verbal crypt, in the complex of ingurgitation and regurgitation:

> ἐνδόμυχος δ᾽ἤπειτα πανάμερος εἰλ**α**πιναστὰς
> ἤσθιε μυρία πάντα· κακὰ δ' ἐξ**άλ**λετο γαστὴρ
> **αἰεὶ** μ**ᾶλ**λον ἔδοντι, τὰ δ' ἐς βυθὸν οἷα **θαλάσσας**
> **ἀλ**εμάτως ἀχάριστα κατέρρεεν **εἴδατα πάντα**.
>
> (*Hymn to Demeter* 87–90)



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> And, then, in the inner recesses, a banqueter all day long, he ate myriad foods, all of them; but the bad stomach leaped out for the man always eating more, and all the foods flowed down in vain, without pleasure, as in the abyss of the sea.

The second part of the sentence, which reproduces the digestive turmoil of Erysichthon's binge eating, is divided into parallel movements, marked by similar sequences of sounds—**ἀει**…**ἔδοντι** (89) and **ἀ**-λεμάτως **ἀ**-χάριστα…**εἴδ**ατα (90)[58]—that cryptographically contain the verb ἀείδω.[59] In a line expressing failed digestion or even vomiting, the double alpha privative arising from the juxtaposition of ἀ-λεμάτως and ἀ-χάριστα invites the reader's eye to attach the single, mutilating letter to εἴδατα, the same term that we saw in the singular in the *Aetia* prologue (εἶδαρ, fr.1.34). The outcome of this imaginative displacement and recombination of letters is ἀ-ειδ(ατα), that is, the same 'singing' root that emerges, in the previous line, from αἰεὶ and ἔδοντι, separated only by μᾶλλον. The paradoxical homology between 'always' (ἀεί) and 'without' (ἀ-, the alpha privative) stemming from this double crypt is in line with the bulimic dynamic—a compulsive eating that cancels itself out—created by the repetitious cadence (αἰεὶ…ἔδοντι / ἀ..ἀ…εἴδατα, 89f.).[60] In the interminable duration of his solitary feasting, then, Erysichthon is not just a voracious banqueter but also the besotted practitioner of a different sympotic activity—singing.[61] Just as his all-day buccality makes him a virtual cicada, the cicadas' singing can be construed as a perpetual self-emptying into the abyss, not of the sea but of the air—one that never achieves disembodiment but is rather caught between 'always' and 'without'.[62] Erysichthon's song sounds like a jerky flow, the stuck liquidity of *la-al-al-ala-al* in εἰλ**α**πιναστάς, ἐξ**άλλ**ετο, μ**ᾶλλ**ον, θ**αλάσσ**ας, **ἀλ**εμάτως—

58. On the phrase ἐξάλλετο γαστήρ ('the stomach leaped out'), see Benvenuti Falciai (1983), 71, who interprets it as an 'image of the incessant wincing of the entrails of Erysichthon, which, far from filling themselves with food, ingurgitate and immediately expel/regurgitate in an unceasing, abnormal peristaltic motion'; cf. Hopkinson (1984) and Stephens (2015) *ad loc.*

59. See Shoptaw (2000), 223, who defines the lyric crypt as 'material recoverable from but not (wholly) present in the poetic text.'

60. On the connection between βού-βρωστις (lit. 'ox-like eating')—used to describe Erysichthon's condition in line 102—and βού-λιμος ('ox-like hunger') see, among others, Faraone (2012), 68f. English 'bulimia' is taken from the related word βου-λιμία.

61. Metaliterary readings of the hymn have cast Erysichthon as the icon of an 'old', anti-Callimachean poetics, the 'enemy' of a Callimachean Demeter: see Müller (1987), 27–45, and Murray (2004), 212–15; for a critique of this interpretation, see Faulkner (2011), 78f., who observes that 'the contrasting images of Demeter and Erysichthon are ultimately destabilizing rather than confirmatory of a sharp distinction between' old and new poetics. I not only emphasize the instability of the binary but use the convergence between Demeter and Erysichthon to locate Callimachean aesthetics in bodily restlessness, a *jouissance* enacted in poetic form. On the feminine perspective of the narrative voice in the hymn, see Bing (1996).

62. See εἰς αἰθέρος βάρος ('into the depth of the sky') in Eur. *Med.* 1296f. Nancy (2016), 111f., coins the term 'buccality' to designate a focus on the mouth that, differently from orality, emphasizes corporeality rather than language; see also Guyer (2007).



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that is, like the droning melody of the (*La*canian) *lala(n)gue* of the cicadas (λαλαγεῦντες, 'burbling', Theoc. 7.139).[63]

A merging of ejective oral acts—verbal and gastric—contributes to the interruptive force of a moment in the third book of the *Aetia*, in the midst of the narrative of Acontius and Cydippe, where the narrator's voice suddenly breaks in to silence itself:

> θυμέ, σύ γ' **ἀείσῃ** καὶ τά περ οὐχ ὁσίη·
> ὤναο, κάρτ' ἔνεκ' οὔ τι θεῆς ἴδες ἱερὰ φρικτῆς,
> ἐξ ἂν ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν **ἤρυγες** ἱστορίην·
>
> (fr.75.5–7 Harder)

> My heart, you will *sing* even what it is not pious to sing. Consider yourself fortunate that you did not see at all the sacred rituals of the terrifying goddess, for you would have *vomited out* the narrative of them too.

In the two pentameters, which assert the narrator's desire to tell the naked truth, to reveal what ought to remain hidden (Hera's secrets), singing (ἀείσῃ) becomes regurgitation (ἐξ…ἤρυγες), with the phantasmic alpha privative of ἀ-είσῃ corresponding to the prefix ἐξ of ἐξ…ἤρυγες.[64] This formalistic loop and the others observed before trope singing as bulimia, troubling the opposition of 'backward' and 'forward' imputed to narrative as a form of discourse directed toward a destination, some notional endpoint. Bulimic expression turns narrative into a negation of itself, something that is not simply regressive but anti-teleological, disarrayed by the *jouissance* of an 'esophageal revolt'.[65] At the same time, this *jouissance* upsets the binary of 'fasting' and 'gorging' and, by extension, 'thinness' and 'fatness.' In the prologue of the *Aetia*, the cicada and the speaking poet follow Philitas, the lean author of *Demeter*, not simply because they elect thinness or disembodiment as their preferred aesthetic habitus, but because they consume themselves while overconsuming, slimming down while stuffing themselves with dew or formal looping, just as their counterparts (respectively, Erysichthon, Demeter, and Philitas) stuff themselves with food, the steps of a physical quest, and the differential traces of a feverish lexical

63. In Hermesianax's epigram on Philitas (περὶ πάντα Φιλίταν / ῥήματα καὶ πᾶσαν τρύομενον λαλιήν, 'Philitas laboring over every word and every speech'), the object of the poet's lexicographical 'going in circles', as I described it above, is λαλιήν, which is etymologically connected with λαλαγεῦντες; see n.43. Could λαλιήν itself—the object of Philitas' obsession—be suffused with the *lala* energy sustaining his investigation of it? On λαλιήν in Hermesianax's testimony, see Dettori (2000a), 16f. In *AP* 16.154.3 (= Archias 33.3 GP) Echo is called λάλον εἰκόνα ('babbling image'), a phrase that not only creates a punning echo between phonic and visual *mimêsis* (*êchô*/*eikôn*) but also associates Echo with the *la-la* of cicadas' *jouissant* vocality; on this epigram, see Gutzwiller (2002), 105f., and Phillips (2016), 233.

64. On Hera's secrets, see Harder (2012), 584–6.

65. I owe the phrase 'esophageal revolt' to Brinkema (2011). Capitalizing on the poetic voice's self-assimilation to a child in the prologue of the *Aetia* (5f.), Payne (2011), 496, detects a 'regressive' dimension: 'The way forward is the way back.' In my reading of Callimachus's most programmatic statement I emphasize temporal looping rather than simple regression.



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investigation. We could also read these aesthetics of looping *jouissance* in the enigmatic prologic phrase ἔπος δ' ἐπὶ τυτθὸν ἑλ[ίσσω ('I spin my word for a little bit', 5): a spinning reflected in the etymological reduplication of τυ-τθόν ('a little'), a stuttering infantile *lala(n)gue*, like τι-τθός ('breast').[66]

Not just a sublimated disembodiment that prolongs the poet's life through sound, Callimachus' fantasy of immortality by starvation, the thinness fetishized in the cicada myth, can be read, not unlike its apparent, vilified opposite, as a rebellious, queer disruption of the regime of linear temporality.[67] Inspired by Eve Sedgwick's poem 'The Use of Fat', Lucas Crawford discusses society's 'slender troubles', whereby 'fat bodies become the new icon for inappropriate desire, miscarriages of the future, and "unfit" parenting.'[68] Crawford posits a connection between 'fat' and 'queer' as modes of non-normative subjectivity that push against patriarchal, heteronormative demands and the Symbolic's imperative of moving *forward*, reproducing, proceeding toward an imagined telos. The poetic immortality that has been invoked to explain Callimachus' dream of insect thinness and starvation remains attached to the idea of song as prolonging the subject's life, monumentalizing it in the aftermath of death, maintaining it within the linearity of a signifying system. In this case, non-linguistic sound is, to an extent, entrapped in the Symbolic constrictions characteristic of language, still an instrument of self-extension through time, a way of disseminating a signifier of (eternal) authority, a form of self-empowering deixis, even if shapeless or wordless. For Crawford, fatness 'is not a "chronic" condition…but is instead a chronic interruption',[69] a 'refusal', 'a continuous, repetitive, turn that is the very opposite of the marches forward or backward presupposed by narratives of evolution or

66. For arguments in favor of Hunt's widely accepted supplement ἑλ[ίσσω, see esp. Massimilla (1996) *ad loc*.; see also Harder (2012), 26f., on the various semantic implications of this supplement. Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2001) object to the supplement, but cf. Payne (2011), 495 n.2; most recently, Gutzwiller (2019) has reevaluated the supplement by viewing it as a hint of metapoetic weaving imagery and an allusion to Erinna's *Distaff*. The infantile coloring of τυτθός is similar to *ma-ma*, *pa-pa*: see Jakobson (1962). On Callimachus's self-presentation as a παῖς in the prologue, see Payne (2011), 495–7; on the Lacanian *lalangue* as a child's stutter, see n.43, and S. Butler (2015), 60f. Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2002), 240, see τυτθόν as 'an implicit pun on Tithonus, so that the old man/cicada is already present in…the opening.' I see τυτθόν as enacting, like ἑλίσσω, the cicada's *lala(n)gê*, its looping sound and temporality.

67. My sense of 'queerness' concerns a twisting of form and time that generates an unceasing looping, undercutting actuality with the endless circling of potentiality. In other words, the notion of queerness that I am theorizing goes beyond gender and sexuality; cf. Nisbet (2003), who sees *leptosunê*—the thinness that in a group of epigrams induces its male victims to hang themselves (a quintessentially feminine suicide)—as a challenge to normative masculinity (see n.34). As part of his attempt to reclaim the monumental ambitions of Hellenistic poetry, Porter (2011), 294, observes that 'Callimachus' cicada-like "slender verses"…refer to [the] quasimaterial quality of sound, while the pretensions to immortality that this λιγὺς ἦχος enables are…as grand as one could ever hope for.'

68. Crawford (2017), 451. Sedgwick's poem is in *Fat Art, Thin Art* (1994), from which this article's epigraph is taken. Though Crawford rejects Edelman's (2004) reading of queerness through the Lacanian death drive, he sees fatness as 'a steadfast refusal to facilitate heteronormativity's future', a refusal that constitutes the main goal of Edelman's *No Future*.

69. Crawford (2017), 460.



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by…narratives of degeneration and decay.'[70] Regarding anorexia, Elizabeth Grosz has proposed a Deleuzian, anti-pathologizing approach, which sees it not simply 'as an out-of-control compliance with the current patriarchal ideals of slenderness' but as 'precisely a renunciation of those ideals'.[71] Reading Callimachus' slenderness (or self-starvation)—identified with the slender Muse—as an instrument for poetic immortality or as reflecting a 'wis[h] for a cold, austere fate, beyond physical pleasure' (as Crane put it)[72] means reinforcing these ideals. Alternatively, the cicada's monotonous sound can be seen as aspiring to a pleasure beyond pleasure, one beyond telos or actualization that preserves 'the continuous process of positive desire'[73]—desire as the opposite of pleasure, or as the expression of a pleasure that is such insofar as it constantly escapes.[74] The cicada's sound can be construed as the opposite of a monument in that it preemptively frustrates the very idea of completion. As queer as fatness, Callimachus' self-starvation, his becoming insect—that is, the sound of an insect—denies the calcification of poetic immortality, the deceptive stability of an apparently realized fullness, through an anti-regime of stuck temporality, an 'alternation of stuffing and emptying'.[75] The shrill, repetitive voice of the cicada—which is not at all slender, in fact—suggests not so much a faint future present as a going in circles, a 'waiting out' for a future *à venir*, always open and unsettled.[76]

In light of this alternative reading of the cicada, we can perhaps see the Callimachus of the *Aetia* prologue as a proto-Mallarmean *poète maudit*. As an aesthetic label, 'Alexandrian'—encompassing allusivity, mannered obscurity, and exuberant experimentalism—has been affixed to Stephane Mallarmé (as well

70. Crawford (2017), 466. Crawford (2017), 459, refers to the introduction of the volume *Regarding Sedgwick*, where, in the wake of Sedgwick, queer temporality is seen as 'at once indefinite and virtual but also forceful, resilient, undeniable…a crossing of temporality with force' (Barber and Clark [2002], 8). See also Freeman (2019), 142, identifying queer time with 'the imperfective aspect denot[ing] a state of sustained doing or being, rather than of moving forward or developing toward an endpoint'; Dinshaw in Dinshaw et al. (2007), 190, conceives of queer time as an 'expanded now in which past, present, and future coincide.'

71. Grosz (1994), 40; see also Orbach (1986).

72. Crane (1986), 275.

73. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 155. In Burt's recent rendition of Erysichthon's hunger (2019) this continuity of desire emerges through *jouissant* form: 'Erysichthon was hungry. / Very hungry. / Burningly, blindingly hungry.'

74. Blanchot (1988), 52: 'Pleasure, essentially, is that which escapes'; for Nancy (2017), 20, 'it is in the escaping that there is pleasure.'

75. Deleuze and Parnet (1987), 110—adding: 'Not a matter of a refusal of the body, [anorexia] is a matter of a refusal of the organism, of what the organism makes the body undergo… [It] is a political system, a micro-politics: to escape from the norms of consumption in order not to be an object of consumption oneself. It is a feminine protest, from a woman who wants to have a functioning of the body and not simply organic and social functions which make her dependent.'

76. On the phrase *à venir*, which iconically splits *avenir* to open a gap of ethical infinity in the future as a utopian/teleological fantasy, see Derrida (2005). On stuckness as 'waiting out', see Hage (2015), 97–106. Freeman (2019), 128, sees queer temporality as a 'stretching out of time beyond its intrumental uses'—a regime of slowness and stasis that she calls *chronocatachrêsis*.



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as Valéry and Baudelaire) since the early twentieth century.[77] But it is not just the ideal of *art pour l'art* that makes Callimachus Mallarmean. In the poem 'Adieu'—the 'farewell' to Mallarmé's collection *Poésies* (1887) cited in the epigraph—unsatisfied hunger seems to produce a sense of plenitude; starvation seems to offer a taste of fullness.[78] More powerful than *fame* (Old French for 'fame, glory'), a survival that depends on possession by a signifier, aspirational closure, and the illusion of a sealed semiotic fullness, *faim* is a form of dispossessed possession—the possession of a lack, of desire, with its persistence, its burdensome presence, its invisible yet tangible weight. Mallarmé's *adieu* offers not permanence but aesthetic insistence, neither the closure of satisfaction nor the simple anti-closure of hunger tout court but the unresolved alternation or simultaneity of *lifedeath*, of stuffing and emptying, which, in Callimachus, renders 'singing' (ἀ-είδειν) as a refusal of the (mutilating) actualization of *fame*. The embrace of *faim* opens the potentiality of a void that is filled yet immediately unfilled.

For queer theorist Leo Bersani, Mallarmé's subversiveness becomes visible especially in his 'restlessness', which is expressed 'not only…in his inability or unwillingness to settle on a coherent account of contemporary poetry, but also in his habit of shuttling between various projects and genres of writing'—something like the *polu-eideia* that we know Callimachus was criticized for.[79] More deeply, 'in his apparent unlearning of the very technique by which what we call statements are formed',[80] Mallarmé embodies what may be 'literature's peculiar nature'—that is, precisely, 'a certain type of restlessness or moving away from its own statements.'[81] Jacques Rancière suggests that in Mallarmé's poetry *rien* ('nothing') distinctly evokes its etymon *rem*, thus becoming 'something, a thing held perpetually, like Hamlet, between being and non-being.'[82] This restless movement between being and non-being, doing and undoing, lies behind the unruly orality that characterizes not just the meaning but the feel, the physical sensation, of singing in Callimachus' most programmatic statement and its intratextual reverberations throughout his corpus. The restlessness of

77. On the Alexandrianism of the French symbolists, see Bonelli (1989), 63–8; Silk (2004); and Pontani (2014).

78. See Evans (2004), 289: 'And so the collection ends with the poet confessing his desire for the absent Ideal… The sempiternal Mallarmean "peut-être" ends the collection on the ambiguity of the poet's relationship with a possibly illusory "rien".'

79. Bersani (1982), 42f. and 45. On Callimachus's appropriation of Ion of Chios' *polueideia*, see esp. Hunter (1997) and Acosta-Hughes (2002), 84.

80. Bersani (1986), 25.

81. Bersani (1982), 45.

82. Rancière (2011), 16. This phenomenon is especially evident in Mallarmé's programmatic poem 'Crise de vers'. See Greaney (2007), 52f.; see also Weiss (2002), ch.2, on asthma as the embodiment of Mallarmé's poetic *lifedeath*, a breath on the precipice of nothingness. As Sartre (1974), 175, put it, in Mallarmé 'the moment of poetic plenitude must correspond to that of annulment'.



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Callimachean singing may register not as an anxiety about poetic survival but as a twisting, or queering, of time through the ingestion and expulsion, expansion and contraction, fattening and slimming of a song subjected to undoing before it is ever actualized.

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