The Hellenistic Poets as Historians

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Abstract: This article explores the ways in which Hellenistic poets handled lived events of the human past, and it argues that they functioned as in some sense what we would recognize as historians. They used four main devices to do so, which are examined in turn: Hellenistic historical epics (a genre whose very existence has been challenged); tragic messenger speeches ('Ezekiel'; Lykophron's *Alexandra*); *aitia* (Kallimachos); prophecy i.e. pseudo-prophecy or prophecy after the event (Ezekiel again; the Third Sibylline Oracle; Lykophron again. Apollonios usually refuses to make use of prophecy in this way). It is argued that Lykophron, who is here dated to the 190s BCE, shows awareness of the then recent trauma of the Hannibalic War. Finally, the poets are tested against ancient and modern definitions of 'history' and 'historian'.

Keywords: Hellenistic; poetry; historians; historical epics; *aitia*; prophecy; 'Ezekiel'; Apollonios; Lykophron; Alexandra; Sibylline Oracles; Hannibal; Polybius

Introduction

By my title I do not just mean such projects as 'how to extract history of any sort from the Hellenistic poets', or 'history and the Hellenistic poets'.[1]

I give a few examples. To take the first (extracting history): if looking for social history, we might adduce some lines of Theokritos as evidence for the expectations of a mercenary in the time of Ptolemy II.[2] Or we might be interested in excavating the poems for religious history. If so, we could examine the evidence for hero-cult in Apollonios, or for cults and festivals in Kallimachos.[3] Or we could draw on Hellenistic epigraphy to illustrate the accuracy of the material about oracular incubation in Lykophron's *Alexandra*, where the poet deals with the Italian cult of the medical hero Podaleirios. Or we could cite the new archaeological and epigraphic evidence for the Classical cult of

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[2]   Theoc. 14.58-9, tr. Gow (1950): 'if you are really so minded as to leave the country,/then Ptolemy is the best pay-master for a free man'.

[3]   See, respectively, Hitch (2012) and Hunter (2011).

the Homeric hero Diomedes. This was found on the central Adriatic island Palagruza, and bears on another passage of Lykophron.[4]

If on the other hand we were to explore the second topic, history and the Hellenistic poets, we might discuss their relation to their immediate historical milieu. That is, the Macedonian and Seleukid patrons of Aratos and Euphorion, and the indebtedness of the main Alexandrian poets to the Ptolemies and their cultural institutions. Recent work has stressed the native Egyptian element in poems like Theokritos' encomium to Ptolemy Philadelphos.[5] That will not be the concern of this paper.

Instead, it will ask how Hellenistic poets, whose main themes were often mythological, nevertheless contrived to narrate lived events of the human past. That is, to function as in some sense what we would recognize as historians. At the end of this article, I discuss further what 'historian' might mean in this context: below, section 5.

1. Hellenistic Historical Epics

The poets used four main devices for functioning as historians, and it will be necessary to ask how distinctively Hellenistic these devices are. The first and most obvious means of poetic narration of real events in my chosen period is one whose very existence is controversial: large-scale historical Hellenistic epics, recording in detail and celebrating the military deeds of Hellenistic kings and commanders. Hellenistic epic was the subject of a short and influential book of 1934 by Konrat Ziegler, which argued that it was a forgotten but important category.[6] The relation between historiography and epic has been much discussed in recent years. The publication on papyrus in 1991 of the poem known as the New Simonides[7] provided at last a solid bridge between early poetry and historiography, although that poem was strictly an elegy not a hexameter epic. Even before that, early elegiac poets like Mimnermos had narrated Ionian colonization struggles.[8] The New Simonides is a narrative of the battle of Plataia (479 BCE), and shows what poets of the third and second centuries BCE might have done. The importance of the New Simonides is that it reduces the generic difference between poetry and history, between epic and historiography.[9] See further below, p. 64.

Ziegler's thesis was challenged by Cameron,[10] who observed that (for example) although Kallimachos' *Lock of Berenike* commemorates Ptolemy Euergetes' Syrian war of 246 BC, only three lines are devoted to the actual campaign. Cameron argued that the main vehicle for praise of Hellenistic rulers was not large-scale epic poems but brief paians, and he listed seventeen known examples. Cameron's polemical thesis was,

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[4]   See *Alex.* lines 1050 (incubation, with the n. in Hornblower (2015)) and 599 (Diomedes, with *SEG* 48.692bis-694).
[5]   See Hunter (2003).
[6]   Ziegler (1934).
[7]   P. Oxy. 3965 (and 2327) = Simonides fr. 11 West²; see the essays collected in Boedeker and Sider (2003).
[8]   Bowie (2009), to cite only one example of this scholar's influential work in the area.
[9]   Epiphanies of divine or mythical figures might seem to provide an acid test of the difference between epic and history-writing. But there are grey areas. See Feeney (1991), 261 and Hornblower (2001) and (2013), 33-6.
[10] Cameron (1995), 263-302.

however, exaggerated:[11] admittedly, the evidence is extremely fragmentary and the epics may well have been fairly short, perhaps no more than 300-400 lines. But he wiped out the general category too completely. For example we have interesting papyrus fragments of an encomiastic poem (actually an elegy) about the Galatian Wars of the third century BC;[12] and Simonides of Magnesia wrote an epic poem celebrating Antiochos I's 'elephant victory', also over Galatians.[13] It is, however, agreed on both sides of the debate that if these epics existed they have all but disappeared, so that (for example) meaningful comparison with the *Alexandra* of Lykophron is out of the question. The hope must be for new material on papyrus.

2. Tragic Messenger Speeches

Classical Greek poetry knew of another way of presenting narrative, namely by the messenger speeches of tragedy; that is my second genre. But only one historical drama survives in full from the great period of Attic tragedy, Aeschylus' *Persians*. And from the Hellenistic period we have for the most part only titles or at best short fragments of the many tragedies which are known to have been written. On this subject Ziegler is still extremely valuable, this time for his long but neglected entry on tragedy in Pauly-Wissowa, which took account of the copious epigraphic evidence for lost tragedians.[14] But there are two Hellenistic tragedies of which extensive quantities survive, both of which are literary outliers, but both of which have a claim to be called historical in subject-matter, and both of which make extensive use of messenger-speeches. One of them has come down in full through the regular manuscript tradition: Lykophron's *Alexandra*, on which more later. The other is a Jewish Greek text, Ezekiel's *Exagoge*,[15] of which 269 lines were quoted by the Christian writer Eusebius from Alexander Polyhistor. It is a versification of the biblical book of Exodus, but adopts many of the features of classical Greek tragedy: thus, for example, it includes conversational exchanges as well as formal messenger speeches. In the prologue, Moses narrates his early life; and a later magnificent section uses the classical device of the messenger speech to describe the pursuit from Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea. Again like the *Alexandra*, the *Exagoge* is of disputed date, but the early second century BCE seems best, as indeed for the *Alexandra* also. The assumption that Ezekiel regarded his material as historical is probable enough anyway, and is reinforced by the marked stylistic and thematic indebtedness to, precisely, the *Persians* of Aeschylus. So we do not need to go into such questions as, whether Pharaoh is or is not the historical Rameses II.

There were other ingenious ways in which poets were able to cover past events which took place in human time, although Hellenistic poetry drew at least as heavily on myth as did the tragic and epinikian poets of the classical period. Many of the examples in the following pages will be from the sphere of colonization. Mythical acts of

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[11]   See esp. Kerkhecker (2001). As he neatly puts it (p. 60), the Hellenistic period was not an 'Eposfreie Zone'. Thanks to Denis Feeney for this reference.

[12]   Barbantani (2001). On these wars see further below p. 63 (Kallimachos' *Hymn to Delos*).

[13]   *FGrHist* 163 and *Suppl. Hell.* no. 723; Scullard (1974), 122 and Cameron (1995), 284-5.

[14]   Ziegler (1937). See now Kotlinska-Toma (2015).

[15]   *TrGF* 1 no. 128; Jacobson (1983); Sider no. 26 (C. Schroeder); Lanfranchi (2018).

foundation were often thought of as preceding historical ones, and poets found ways of coping with the transition. One such technique was aetiology.

3. *Aitia*

So my third genre is *Aitia*, a series of questions calling for learned answers. This is characteristically Hellenistic,[16] and is associated with one scholar-poet Kallimachos in particular. Here is a clear example, from a fragment about the Sicilian cities.[17] The city in question is Zankle, later Messina. The muse Klio speaks, resting her arm on her sister's shoulder: 'people, the one group from Kyme, the other from Chalkis, led by Perieres and the wilful and mighty Krataimenes, set foot on Trinakria (Sicily), and built a wall around the town'. Compare Thucydides on the same event, from his Sikelika: 'the oikists were Perieres and Krataimenes, the one from Kyme, the other from Chalkis. And at first it was called Zankle'.[18] Kallimachos has here simply versified Thucydides. If Kalliope, muse of epic poetry, is the unnamed muse on whom Klio, muse of history, rests her arm, that would be a neat signifier for my earlier point about the closeness of the two genres. But the differentiation of function of the nine muses may be later than Kallimachos' time. Be that as it may, Kallimachos here operates as a historian, by the device of a question about who founded Zankle. The poem did not, as far as we can see, actually name Thucydides (whose name could be scanned with an initial dactyl).

But on another interesting occasion Kallimachos does cite a fifth- century prose historian by name. In the *Marriage of Akontios and Kydippe*, he included an excursus on the founders or *oikists* of the Aegean island of Keos near Attica, in which he invoked explicitly the authority of the historian Xenomedes. He said that Xenomedes 'once set down the whole island in a mythological record, a μυθολόγος μνήμη' and he goes on to list the founders of the four cities of Keos.[19] The two words I have given in Greek have usually been taken to mean 'mythic tales'. But Harder, in her commentary on the line, writes 'the fact that Aristotle uses the word μυθολόγος about Herodotus suggests a broader interpretation which includes the historical period'.[20] Fowler agrees. He says it was a work of 'local history, particularly the island's prehistory'.[21] Kallimachos' more or less explicit dependence on prose predecessors of the scope and stature of Thucydides and Xenomedes does not reduce his claim to be writing something recognizable as history here. Otherwise we would have to say that Livy was not a historian because his later books depend closely on Polybius. And indeed there might be difficulties about categorizing Thucydides himself, because his own account of early Sicily, from which Kallimachos quotes, was itself secondary, dependent on the earlier prose work by Antiochos of Syracuse. Indeed, we cannot exclude the possibility that Kallimachos drew on Antiochos direct, rather than on Thucydides. After all, Antiochos' history was known

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[16]   But the Aristotelian *Problemata* are a classical precursor. See Rose (1924), 49, discussing the background to Plutarch's *Roman Questions*. Harder (2012), vol. 1, 26-7 has a brief comparison between Kallimachos' *Aitia* and Plutarch's *Greek* and *Roman Questions*.

[17]   Kall. fr. 43 Pfeiffer lines 58-9.

[18]   Thuc. 6.4.5.

[19]   Kall. fr. 75 Pfeiffer lines 54-5.

[20]   Harder (2012), vol. 2, 765.

[21]   Fowler (2013), 733.

to Strabo in the time of Augustus, so will certainly have been available in Ptolemaic Alexandria.

4. Prophecy

But the main device by which a poet of myth could narrate events of the past was by means of prophecy. Prophetic and apocalyptic literature is therefore my fourth category or genre. Naturally I mean pseudo-prophecy, prophecy after the event. There is a classical precursor, the prophecy by Medea near the start of Pindar's *Fourth Pythian* (lines 13-56), which foretells the historical foundation of Kyrene from Thera. Ezekiel in the *Exagoge* (above) puts a speech into the mouth of God (beginning at line 132) which from the literary point of view is in effect a *post eventum* prophecy, albeit a prophecy of an unusually authoritative sort![22] But the Hellenistic poet who exploited this device most effectively and on the largest scale is Lykophron, the author of the long iambic poem the *Alexandra*. I will have more to say about this extraordinary poem.

a. Prophecy Refused: Apollonios

But first let us look at what happens when a Hellenistic poet of myth *refuses* to make extensive use of prophecy. The poet I have in mind is Apollonios Rhodios, and the poem is the *Argonautika*. My word 'refusal' may seem surprising. After all, we might have expected otherwise, in view of the proem to Book 1, with its invocation of Apollo, and its mention of the prophecy to Pelias (1.1-5). But there is not much prophecy in the poem as a whole; and what there is tends to refer to the best way the Argonauts can achieve a successful *nostos* (νόστος), 'return'. This self-imposed austerity put Apollonios in a difficult position. He was a precise writer, who generally avoided the anachronism of betraying awareness of historical city foundations which lay in the future at the time of the Argo's voyage. So in book 1 he says that the Argonaut Polyphemos will found Mysian Kios.[23] This ignores the usual tradition of colonization from Ionian Miletos.

So in Apollonios, colonization is usually dealt with by a self-restriction to a mythical framework. He several times invokes an ancient and very useful colonial myth, the network of the daughters of the river-god Asopos. This myth was the subject of a poem by the poet Korinna, first published from a papyrus by Wilamowitz. I take Korinna to be Hellenistic not classical in date.[24] Asopos' daughters, the Asopidai, were a family of nymphs, a sort of sisterhood. This is horizontal as opposed to vertical kinship. An example from Herodotus is the sisterhood between the peoples of Taras or Tarentum in S. Italy, and Knidos in Asia Minor. Herodotus says they were φίλοι μάλιστα, 'special friends'; he does not explain the reason, which is surely that both cities were supposedly colonies of Sparta.[25] Again, Thucydides, describing the forces on each side at Syracuse in 413 BCE, comments that the Kerkyraians were fighting against Korinthians and Syracusans, although they were colonists of the former and kin, ξυγγενεῖς, of the latter

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22   I owe this point to Donna Shalev.
23   Ap. Rh. 1.1346-7.
24   *PMG* 654; Sider (2016) no. 20 (A. Vergados)
25   Hdt. 3.128.2. See already Stein (1893), 149, and now Malkin (1994), 81.

(7.57.7). That is, Kerkyra was a sister of Syracuse because of shared foundation from mother Korinth. So the notion of such sisterhood was familiar to ancient Greeks. But the Asopidai are a particularly interesting case because they are a sisterhood *and nothing else*; the parent is a river, not an identifiable metropolis, and it is sometimes unclear which of several Greek rivers called Asopos is meant.

Two of the mythical Asopidai were Thebe, the eponymous nymph of Boiotian Thebes, and Aigina. This politically important mythical sisterhood was mentioned explicitly by Pindar and Herodotus, and implicitly by Thucydides. Kerkyra was another of Asopos' daughters, and Bowra reconciled this with the more usual story of Korinthian foundation.[26] He suggested that the original Asopid list was compiled by the early epic poet Eumelos of Korinth, who originated the idea that the nymph Kerkyra was carried off by Poseidon, patron god of Korinth. Apollonios in the *Argonautika* knew this story, but transferred it from Corfu to Black Kerkyra, Korzula, further up the Adriatic: 'next after this they coasted by [Black] Kerkyra, where Poseidon established a home for Asopos' daughter'.[27]

Again, Apollonios says that the eponym of Sinope in the Black Sea, historically a Milesian colony, was another Asopid.[28] Remarkably, the only mention of Miletos by that name in Apollonios is early on, the Argonaut Erginos had 'left behind illustrious Miletos' (1.186-7). This near-silence is remarkable because much of the poem concerns the Black Sea region — overwhelmingly an area of historical Milesian settlement, with some additional activity by Megarians.

When Apollonios does mention such a historical tradition of colonization he always flags it firmly as a future event, as when he says the Korinthian Bacchiads settled Kerkyra 'at a later time', μετὰ χρόνον (4.1212-13). There is a particularly good example of this precision in another passage of book 1, and this is unique and important as the poem's only allusion to the Milesians as the later and historical colonists of the north-eastern zone of the Greek world. Apollonios is talking about Artakie near Kyzikos on the sea of Marmara, a Homeric place already known to Herodotus under what for an epic poem was a metrically unsuitable name: Artake. Apollonios says of Artakie that 'later on, μετόπισθε, the Ionian Neleids dedicated an anchor there'. That must look forward to the historical Milesian colonists of Kyzikos and Artak(i)e; the scholiast and all modern commentaries miss this. These Ionian Neleids are the Milesians, the historical founders of Kyzikos and Artak(i)e. Neileos, son of Kodros and descendant of Neleus, was the founder of Miletos, as Herodotus tells us.[29]

Another and more famous example of an authorial flag to the future closes the whole poem, where Apollonios describes the future foundation of Thera from Sparta, and is again careful to make clear that he is jumping forward to the historical period. Euphemos 'took heart from the prophecy and threw the clod into the deep. From it there arose an island Kalliste [Thera], sacred nurse to Euphemos' children. Driven out of

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[26]   For Thebe(s) and Aigina as Asopids, see Hdt. 5.80.1; Pindar *Isthmian* 8.16-18; cf. Thuc. 3.64.3. Bowra (1953), 54-65.

[27]   Ap. Rh. 4.566-7, Κέρκυραν ἵκοντο /ἔνθα Ποσειδάων Ἀσωπίδα νάσσατο κούρην.

[28]   Ap. Rh. 2.946-7; cf. *IACP*. no. 729.

[29]   1.959 Νηλείδαι μετόπισθεν Ἰάονες. For Artake, see Hdt. 6.33.2 with *IACP*: no. 736, and for Neileos — son of Kodros and descendant of Neleus — as oikist of Miletos see Hdt. 9.97.

Sintian Lemnos by Etruscans, they reached Sparta as suppliant colonists. Later they left Sparta, led by Theras … But this happened after (μέτοπιν) the time of Euphemos' (4.1756-64). The word for 'later', μετόπισθε or its variant μέτοπιν, is Apollonios' favoured authorial way of flagging a shift from mythical to historical events.[30] The passage about Thera is in fact unusual in the *Argonautica* in that it is generated by a passage of actual prophecy; this immediately precedes it in the poem. Euphemos has had a strange dream in which Triton's child came out from the clod of earth given him by Triton, and then promised that she would emerge later, μετόπισθε, into the sunlight, ready for his descendants. Jason interprets this as a sign that the god would turn the clod into an island (Thera) for Euphemos' descendants, ὁπλότεροι παίδων (4.1744). Then follows the main authorial passage which ends with μέτοπιν. That passage may also imply that Kyrene was founded from Thera, a sequence also given by Kallimachos, and derived from Pindar, Herodotus and no doubt common knowledge. But Kyrene is oddly unmentioned here by Apollonios, and some modern scholars think his silence about Kyrene reflects Ptolemaic propaganda, a denial of Battiad claims to the neighbouring kingdom.[31] We will see later, when discussing possible definitions of history, that Kallimachos also flags a shift to the historical future by means of a 'later than this' formula put in the mouth of a prophet, no less a *mantis* than Apollo himself. See below, p. 63, for 'later', ὕστερον, in the *Hymn to Delos*. But this example, like the closural lines of the *Argonautika*, takes us away from avoidance of prophecy to prophecy itself, to which we will soon turn.

We should not, however, leave Apollonios without glancing at the thirteen fragmentary poems about city foundations, the κτίσεις poems, now conveniently printed at the end of Race's Loeb edition.[32] These poems may have enabled Apollonios to function as a historian of a sort. The fragments are however very short, except no. 13 about Lesbos, from Parthenios. It has long been noticed that most of the cities have Ptolemaic links. In such a situation, speculating about the contents of the poems is dangerous. But we can make a few guesses. For example, the poem on the κτίσις of Knidos (frag. 6 Race) surely talked about Sparta, because Knidos (as we saw in connection with Taras) claimed Spartan origin. If that is right, it is tempting to explain it in terms of topical international politics at the time Apollonios was writing in Alexandria. An inscription from Athens about the Chremonidean War of the 260s BCE calls the Spartans friends and allies of Ptolemy Philadelphos (*Syll.*[3] 434/5).

b. The Third Sibylline Oracle

I now turn to prophecy, but not yet to Lykophron. I begin instead with the third of the Jewish-Greek hexameter Sibylline Oracles. This, the earliest and most historically important of the set, is yet another poem of disputed date, but is probably from the mid second century BCE. My example will be the section about the Rhodians and their varying Hellenistic fortunes, and in particular their good relations with Rome until it

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[30]   For a Homeric precursor (ὄπισθε), see below, n. 83.
[31]   Kall. *Hymn 2 (To Apollo)* 71-9 (cf. fr. 7 Pf. for 'Lakonian Thera') and Pindar *Pythian* 4, Hdt. 4.145-9. For the colonial sequence Sparta-Thera-Kyrene-Euesperides (modern Benghazi), *SEG* 18.882. Ptolemaic propaganda: see Hunter (2015) ad loc. (cautious).
[32]   Race (2008), 475-85.

went sour after 189 BCE. (See below for the passage.) The Rhodian-Roman relationship does also feature in Lykophron, but only indirectly, in a section about Philoktetes. Kassandra makes Philoktetes, whose *nostos* after the Trojan war brought him to the Kroton region of S. Italy, help Lindian i.e. Rhodian commanders against Achaian enemies. The Aristotelian *On marvellous things heard* has the same story. Rhodian colonization in Italy, as opposed to Sicily, is not supported from archaeology or other non-literary evidence, and the key to the puzzle may lie in hellenistic Rhodian friendship with Rome. The Romans sent a successful colony to Croton in 194 BCE, and thus they succeeded where their Rhodian friends had failed.[33] (Note: I spell the city Kroton in Greek contexts, and Croton where it refers to the colony sent in the 190s).

Polybius, writing later in the second century, provides the key text for the early stages of the Rhodian-Roman relationship. Under the year 167 BCE, he claims authorially that the first Roman friendly contacts with the Rhodians went back nearly 140 years, so about 306 BCE. He says that the two states have shared in many splendid achievements for that entire period, but with no formal alliance. Holleaux, as part of his general thesis about the lateness of Roman interest in the Greek east, tried to emend 140 to 40, producing 206 BCE. This is nowadays generally and rightly rejected.[34] One reason for rejection is sea-power. The Rhodians were the great thalassocrats of the hellenistic age, and it makes perfect sense for the Romans to have wished for their help and friendship at that early date: Harris has shown that the beginnings of Roman sea-power should be pushed back as early as the late fourth century.[35] The Rhodians stayed cannily on the right side of Rome for a long time, and they gained hugely in the territorial adjustments of the Peace of Apamea of 189 BCE, having contributed to the Roman defeats of both Philip V, and then of the Seleukid Antiochos III, especially at the sea-battle of Myonnesos in 190 BCE. But it all started to go wrong a very few years later, when in 178 the Rhodians caused annoyance at Rome by escorting Seleukos IV's daughter Laodike by sea to her bridegroom King Perseus of Macedon, son of Philip V. The rare word for this ceremonial escorting is νυμφαγωγία. It is also used adjectively by Lykophron (of the Argo carrying Medea); and it has been suggested that the poet had this Laodike in mind when narrating the unhappy fate of the mythical Laodike early in the poem.[36] Be that as it may, and 178 BCE is a little late even for my view of the composition date of Lykophron, the turn-around in Rhodian fortunes was complete by 167. In that year they were punished by the Romans for their presumption in having attempted mediation between themselves and Perseus. The main punitive blow was to declare Delos as a free port.[37] This hit Rhodian commercial interests very hard.

These events, and the Rhodian-Roman friendship which preceded them, may not sound the stuff of poetry. On the contrary, they found their unmistakable way into the

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[33]   See Lyk. *Alex*. 919-29, Ps.-Ar. *de mir. ausc*. 107 and the other ancient passages cited at n. 59 below. The Roman colony: Livy 34.45. For detailed supporting argument, see Hornblower (2018), chs. 2 and 4.

[34]   Pol. 30.5.6; against Holleaux (1921), 28-36 see e.g. Schmitt (1957), 6-29

[35]   Harris (2016).

[36]   Pol. 25.4.8; *Syll.*³ 639; Lyk. *Alex.*1025.

[37]   Pol. 30.31.10.

Third Sibylline Oracle, which provides a history of Hellenistic Rhodes in a nutshell.[38] This describes correctly Rhodian independence and sea-power, then actually speaks of the Romans and Rhodians as lovers, ἐρασταί, a strong word. The Rhodians, the poet says, fell prey to their lovers and a grievous yoke was placed on their neck by the measures of 167. The poet correctly puts the blame on the Rhodians themselves, for their folly.

c. Lykophron

Now for Lykophron's *Alexandra*. It consists of 1474 lines of iambic trimeters, the metre of the non-choral parts of classical tragedy. Nearly all the poem purports to be a prophecy by the Trojan princess Kassandra, who foretells the entire Europe-Asia conflict from before the main Trojan War to the Roman conquest of Greece. The long central section (lines 417-1282) narrates the fates of the Greek heroes on their returns, *nostoi*, and attempted returns from Troy, and the new settlements which they founded when they could not get home; a later section (discussed below) deals with historical Greek colonisation of Asia Minor. The poem can be seen as a huge tragic messenger-speech, because a guard reports to Priam what Kassandra says. So it exemplifies my second category, tragedy, as well as my fourth, prophecy.

I believe the poem dates from the early second century BCE (around 190 BCE) and is not by the known tragic poet Lykophon of a century earlier; and that the famous closing sections about Rome (including the prediction of Roman sceptre and monarchy over land and sea)[39] celebrate the victory of the consul Titus Quinctius Flamininus over Philip V of Macedon at Kynoskephalai in 197 BCE. In my opinion the poem, though itself originating in S. Italy, shows literary knowledge of the great third-century Alexandrian poets and of prose works later in that century (by Eratosthenes and Philostephanos); and also historical awareness of the Hannibalic or Second Punic War 218-201 BCE. On this latter aspect, see further below.

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[38]   καὶ σύ, Ῥόδος, πουλὺν μὲν ἀδούλωτος χρόνον ἔσσηι,

      ἡμερίη θυγάτηρ, πουλὺς δέ τοι ὄλβος ὄπισθεν   445

      ἔσσεται, ἐν πόντωι δ᾽ ἕξεις κράτος ἔξοχον ἄλλων.

      ἀλλὰ μεταῦτις ἕλωρ ἔσηι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐρασταῖς

      κάλλεσιν ἠδ᾽ ὄλβωι· δεινὸν ζυγὸν αὐχένι θήσηι.

      Thou O Rhodes, shalt long escape slavery, O daughter of the day;

      great shall be thy wealth in later times.

      On sea thou shalt have power pre-eminent over others.

      But in the end thou shalt be a prey to thy lovers [=the Romans]

      with thy beauty and wealth: a grievous yoke shalt thou put upon thy neck

                          (*Or. Sib.* 3.444-8, tr. Lanchester)

[39]   Lyk. *Alex.* 1226-35 and 1435-50. See esp. 1226-9, 'the glory of the race of my grandfathers [the Trojans] will be greatly increased by their descendants [the Romans]. With their spears, they will win the victory-wreath and the first-spoils, taking sceptre and kingship over land and sea, γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης σκῆπτρα καὶ μοναρχίαν'. Here and elsewhere, I use the most recent English translation, my own: Hornblower (2015).

Kassandra does not suffer from the disadvantage of the anonymous narrator of Apollonios' *Argonautika*: she moves both backwards and forwards, the queen on the narrative chess-board. I pointed out above that Apollonios feels obliged to flag historical events punctiliously, often with a μετόπισθε formula, 'at a later time'. Kassandra by contrast is able to display explicit and unapologetic knowledge of historical city foundations and kinship ties, and she does so, narrating the Greek settlements of the Aiolid, then Ionian Miletos and then the Dorian south-east Aegean. That is part of a long section[40] from near the end of the poem, recounting the clashes between Asia and Europe down to the Roman takeover of Greece. After the colonization sub-section, the narrative becomes even more obviously historical: there is a section on Midas, in which however the poet admittedly amalgamates the historical king with the mythical Midas, he of the ass's ears. Kassandra then narrates, with clear and detailed indebtedness to Herodotus, Xerxes' invasion of Greece and its humiliating failure. Xerxes is not actually named, but he is called a 'single giant of the seed of Perseus'. This elegantly echoes Herodotus' remark that Xerxes' 'good looks and physical height' meant that there was nobody more deserving to lead an army of so many myriads of men.[41]

Otherwise, specific and concrete allusions in the poem to particular historical events and personalities of the Hellenistic period are very rare. (We will see below that there is a clear allusion to a Classical Athenian individual, the general Diotimos son of Strombichos who visited Naples). Alexander the Great himself is surely the 'fierce lion', 'born from Aiakos and from Dardanos', who will 'put to sleep the grave conflict' between Europe and Asia (1439). His illegitimate son Herakles by Barsine, daughter of the Persian satrap Artabazos, is subject of an even more explicit allusion, the only mention of a historical character by name in the entire poem: 'the Tymphaian snake (Polyperchon) will slay Herakles during a feast, the descendant of Aiakos, of the seed of Perseus, no distant kin of the Temeneioi' (i.e. a Macedonian prince). This, in a poem largely constructed from myth, is unexpected: it alludes to a real-life murder, narrated under 309 BCE by the great historian of the Age of the Successors, Hieronymos of Kardia, from whom Lykophron may well have got the story. Polyperchon acted at the persuasion of Kassandros.[42]

Hieronymos may also lie behind a longer and more remarkable section of the poem, Kassandra's prediction of the transfer of the bones of the Homeric Hektor from Ophryneion near Troy to Boiotian Thebes, where he became a healing hero.[43] This cult of relics is not attested in any extant or fragmentary Attic tragedy, nor in the Boiotian poets Hesiod or Pindar. But it was known to writers later than Lykophron. So the myth of Hektor's bones is post-classical in origin.[44] It may relate, as Schachter has plausibly suggested, to Kassandros' refoundation of Thebes in 316 BCE. This event, a deliberate

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40   Lyk. *Alex.* 1369-1434.
41   Lyk. *Alex.* 1413-14, Περσέως ἕνα σπορᾶς/στελεῖ γίγαντα; cf. Hdt. 7.187.2, nobody ἀξιονικότερος than Xerxes for κάλλος καὶ μέγεθος.
42   Lyk. *Alex.* 801; Diod. 20.20 and 28.
43   Lyk. *Alex.* 1208-9, ἐξ Ὀφρυνείων ἠρίων ἀνειρύσας/ἄξει Καλύδνου τύρσιν i.e. to Thebes.
44   The view here taken is that the epigram about Hektor in the so-called *Peplos* ascribed to Aristotle (F 640 Rose 46) is Hellenistic, not fourth-century. The point is argued by the present author elsewhere (Hornblower 2018: 151-3).

reversal of Alexander the Great's destruction of Thebes in 335, is known from Diodorus and an inscription.[45] But although the political motive is attractive, it is still necessary to explain the choice of Thebes for Hektor's burial place. Now Kassandros famously hated Alexander, who posed as the new Achilles; and Homer's Achilles also sacked a city called Thebe. But that city was not Boiotian Thebe/s, which played no part in the Trojan War, and is notoriously absent under that name from the *Catalogue of Ships* in *Iliad* book 2. The Thebe which Achilles sacked was a town in the Troad from which Hektor's wife Andromache came.[46] The choice of Boiotian Thebes makes perfect sense if we posit a mythical kinship link between the two identically-named Aiolian places: Boiotian and Asiatic Thebes. It is a fair guess that Lykophron's source was Hieronymos. He was governor of Boiotian Thebes in the 290s,[47] and is the source for Diodorus' material about Theban myth and early history.

The evidence for the early Hellenistic refoundation of Thebes is, as we have seen (n. 45), partly epigraphic. There are many other occasions on which Lykophron's poem receives sometimes unexpected corroboration from epigraphy. A famous example concerns the tribute of the Lokrian Maidens, who in some sombre lines (1141-73) are represented as making dreadful atonement for Lokrian Ajax's sexual assault on Kassandra herself. Lykophron is not quite the first author to mention the tribute; that was Aeneas Tacticus in the middle of the fourth century BCE, in a brief sentence.[48] But Lykophron's is the earliest and best detailed account. Nobody could have predicted that a prose inscription, published by Adolf Wilhelm at the beginning of the twentieth century, would show that the ritual was a historical fact, perhaps an initiatory marital practice at the local Lokrian sanctuary at Physkeis.[49] Again, inscriptions attest many of the accumulated divine cult-epithets in the *Alexandra*, and this is evidence that the poem reflects cultic realities.[50]

But a different approach is possible. It takes its start from the assumed composition date in the 190s, when Italy was recovering from the recent trauma of Hannibal's invasion and long-lasting presence. Lykophron arguably makes Kassandra show awareness of a number of south and central Italian places which feature in the Augustan historian Livy's third Decade (books 21-30), the only uninterrupted surviving detailed narrative of the Second Punic War. It seems reasonable to expect that this long struggle would have left marks on a poem which reaches its climax with the military victory of Kassandra's kinsman the 'unique wrestler', that is to say a Roman commander, best identified with Flamininus (above, p. 53). The word 'kinsman' presupposes the myth of Rome as daughter city of Troy because of the foundational activity of the refugee Aineias. More on that below.

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45   Diod. 19.53; *Syll.*[3] 337; *FGrHist* 154 Hieronymos T8; Schachter (1981-94), 1. 233-4.

46   See Hom. *Il*. 6.415-6 for Achilles' sack of Thebe. At *Il*. 2.505, Homer lists Hypothebe, not Thebes, in the Boiotian section of the *Catalogue*.

47   *FGrHist* 154 T8, from Plutarch *Demetr*. 39.

48   Aen. Tact. 31.24.

49   Lyk. *Alex*. 1141-73; for the inscription, Schmitt (1969), no. 472, and for a Greek text with English translation see Hornblower (2018), ch. 6, ANNEX C.

50   Hornblower (2014).

To avoid being misunderstood, I must say a word about my use of Livy, because I will often cite him for facts and events and reactions to them. His sources for the Third Decade are the subject of much scholarly disagreement. The main candidates are Polybius and Coelius Antipater, who wrote his history of the war in the last third of the second cent. BCE.: *FRHist* 15. Livy also drew on the first-century annalistic historian Valerius Antias (*FRHist* 25). Coelius himself used Silenos of Caleacte (*FGrHist* 175), Fabius Pictor (*FGrHist* 809; *FRHist* 1) and Polybius. Lykophron could theoretically have read Silenos and Fabius, both of whom were contemporaries of Hannibal, but is (in my opinion) more likely to have known about his activities from oral informants and local traditions. After all, the poet did not need literary authorities to instruct him in the naval importance of Naples and therefore its potential value to Hannibal (below). But Livy makes the point neatly — wherever he got it from — and it is legitimate and appropriate to quote him for it.

Many passages of the *Alexandra* make particularly good sense when read as implying knowledge of Hannibal's activities in Italy and of Hasdrubal's in Spain. Here is a particularly clear and important example. The context is Odysseus' visits to Campania. A long section about Naples, Greek Neapolis, and its guardian Siren Parthenope culminates at the dead centre of the poem (737). Moreover Neapolis, under its ethnic Neapolitai, is one of the very few place-names to be mentioned *en clair*, without Kassandra's usual riddling periphrases. Now the friendship of Naples, which was the first of Rome's *socii navales* and received a favorable *foedus* in 326 BCE, was crucial to Roman denial of the seas to Carthage in the war against Hannibal. He wanted a first-rate harbour, so as to bring in desperately needed reinforcements across from Carthage. Livy makes this point explicitly when he says that straight after destroying a Roman consular army at Cannae in 216, Hannibal tried to besiege Naples so as to possess a maritime city: *oppugnaturus Neapolin, ut urbem maritimam haberet.* But he saw no hope of success there, so turned against Capua instead. Naples continued to be of naval value to Rome in the war against Antiochos; it was there that Livius Salinator in 191 BCE assembled an allied fleet on the long sea-journey from Rome to the Aegean. Sea-power was vital to Roman success in the Middle Republic. After all, Lykophron specified Roman dominion by land *and sea*.[51]

Lykophron, no less than Kallimachos, had his sources among prose historians. One of the most important of these was Timaios of Sicilian Tauromenion, who wrote in exile at Athens in around 300 BCE. One of the passages of the *Alexandra* which can most confidently be derived from Timaios' history is the account of the torch-race established in the 5th century BCE at Naples by the Athenian general Diotimos, known from Thucydides and an inscription to have commanded a force sent to Kerkyra on the eve of the Peloponnesian war. For Kassandra he is the 'commander of the whole fleet of Mopsops': Mopsops was a mythical early king of Athens. A scholiast identifies the commander as Diotimos by citing Timaios specifically. A re-colonisation of the place by the Athenians in the Periklean period is here implied: Neapolis, New City, implies an older one. The episode says more about Lykophron's interest in Hellenistic Naples than about his interest in Hellenistic as opposed to Thucydidean Athens.[52]

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51   Lyk. *Alex.* 712-37; Hoffmann (1934). 21-41; Livy 23.1.5. Cf. above p. 52, citing Harris.
52   Th. 1.45.2 +ML 61 (O/R no. 148); Lyk. *Alex.* 732-7; *FGrHist* 566 Timaios F98.

Lykophron was, then, deeply interested in Campania. The rivers and lakes of the underworld, conventionally located in Campania, are the subject of some powerfully evocative lines. The most famous of these places was still an active pilgrimage site in Lykophron's day: lake Avernus, in Greek Aornos, the sinister 'Place of No Birds' (the literal meaning of the Greek toponym), Kassandra's 'lake of Aornos encircled by a noose'. It was home to a cult of the dead, and an actual *nekyomanteion* or oracle of the dead. Lake Avernus received a distinguished visitor in 214 BCE, no less than Hannibal himself, who sacrificed there. Livy's rationalizing source held that this was a pretence, to mask a surprise attack on Puteoli, and the strategic motive should not be discounted (he needed good access to and from the sea, as we have seen) but Livy is explicit that Hannibal did indeed make the intended sacrifice. To whom, and why, and how? What ancestral Barcid spirit, if any, did he invoke, or what murdered ghost? So unusual a sacrificer and oracular consultant will not easily have been forgotten in the years when Lykophron was touring the sacred places of the region and perhaps gathering oral information.[53]

The war against Hannibal was fought not only in Italy but in Spain. At the end of Lykophron's curious narrative about Boiotian colonization of the Balearic islands, there is an unexpected and illogical mention of the 'gates of Tartessos', in the far south of Spain, near Gades. If it be asked, 'why should this remote part of Spain feature at all in the *Alexandra*?', it should be recalled that P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus' victories over Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal Barca at Baecula (208 BCE) and over Hasdrubal son of Gisgo at Ilipa (206) were won in southern Spain; in particular, Ilipa actually adjoins Tartessos. In between these two battles, Hasdrubal Barca crossed over to Italy to try to reinforce Hannibal, but was defeated and killed at the battle of the Metaurus river in Umbria (207 BCE) by M. Livius Salinator and C. Claudius Nero. This ended his brother's Hannibal's hopes, a point elaborated in an ode by Horace.[54]

These faraway successes contributed as much to the eventual defeat of Hannibal as did military operations against him in Italy itself. Carthage itself is not mentioned directly by Kassandra, nor is the African theatre in which Scipio and Hannibal confronted each other for the final showdown at Zama (202 BCE). But she does mention (in its adjectival form) the river Kinyps (line 885). It is next door to Lepcis (Magna), one of the 'Three Cities' which made up Tripolitania; this whole area was for long a Carthaginian dependency, until absorbed in the Numidian kingdom of Massinissa, Scipio's ally at Zama. The river is much too far west for its immediate Libyan context in the poem. Is the Kinyps a little tug to the reader in the direction of Carthage? Otherwise, there is plenty in the poem about the Carthaginian's colonial ancestors the Phoenicians; and if Lykophron's Melite is Malta, this was a trading station and naval base of both the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians after them. Malta was a Carthaginian possession at the start of the Hannibalic War (218 BCE).[55]

But Italy itself was Hannibal's base for many years, and this has arguably left traces on the *Alexandra*. One mythical Aitolian, Diomedes, is the subject of two separate and lengthy excursuses in the *Alexandra*. They both concern the region of Daunia, modern

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53   Lyk. *Alex.* 704; cf. (Hannibal) Livy 24.12.4, 13.1 and esp. 6.
54   Lyk. *Alex.* 643 (Tartessos); Pol. 10.38-40; Livy 27.17-20; Hor. *Odes* 4.4.
55   Lyk. *Alex.* 1027 (Malta), cf. Livy 21.51.1

N. Puglia, whose main city was Greek Argyrippa, Latin Arpi, founded by Diomedes. Appian says that a local elite family called the Dasii claimed Aitolian descent. They are surely in Kassandra's mind when she says the Daunian land will suffer under the curse of Diomedes until someone deriving from his own Aitolian stock should dig the land. That is, until the Dasii should claim it. The most notable Dasius, whom Livy calls Dasius Altinius, began by supporting Carthage in the Roman war against Hannibal but tried to reverse this later. It is tempting to detect a topical dimension here, given the prominence of the Aitolians in the high politics of the age of Lykophron.[56]

Hannibal's occupation of Magna Graecia may have left its mark on the *Alexandra*, as well as on the cities of the region. His headquarters, Hannibal's camp, was between Lokroi and Kroton, close to Skylettion, mod. Squillace. The evidence is a passage from the elder Pliny. Skylletion, an old Greek foundation, found its way into the text of Lykophron: Menelaos, says Kassandra, 'shall come as a wanderer to the Iapygian people,/and shall hang up gifts to the Skyletrian maiden', παρθένῳ Σκυλητρίᾳ. As *Scolacium Minervium*, the place was a Roman colony.[57] The cult-name Minervium supports the idea that Lykophron's cult epithet Skylletria for Athena (Latin Minerva) was intended to suggest Skylettion, as well as hinting at one of the words for military spoils, σκῦλα, the only explanation given by the scholia. So if Lykophron alluded obliquely to Skyll6tion, and there is a good chance that he did, he was certainly flattering the mythological knowledge of his more erudite readers and hearers;[58] but he was also reminding Romans and South Italian Greeks alike of a site which had been the military nerve-centre of Hannibal's recent invasion of and presence in the region.

Lykophron and some later authors, notably Cato the Elder and Virgil, associated the Kroton region with Philoktetes.[59] The Epic Cycle had brought him safely home to Thessaly, so his Italian adventures are a post-classical development, and perhaps first saw the light of respectable day in Timaios. Bowersock, discussing the reception of the Philoktetes myth at Rome, has suggested that the hero, as a Greek maltreated by his fellow-Greeks, had an appeal for the Roman descendants of the Trojans, and that his third-century BCE transplantation to Italy was part of an effort to 'co-opt Philoctetes for the cause of the new Roman state'.[60] We should certainly ask why an early second-century BCE Greek poet should treat these places as he does.

By the 280s BCE, as a result of of Oscan expansion in peninsular Italy, the Greek colonies were diminished in territory, population and freedom of movement. Lokroi, Kaulonia and Rhegion formed one of four Greek enclaves in Magna Graecia; the other three were round Elea, Thourioi, and Kroton.[61] Alignment with Rome, sooner or later, was inevitable. Kroton, like Kaulonia and Lokroi, went over to Rome after Pyrrhus' departure from Italy in 275, in the aftermath of his defeat at the battle of Beneventum. Late in the century things got worse for Kroton. Remotely situated as it was, Kroton

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56   Lyk. *Alex.* 592, 623-3, 1047-66; cf. App. *Hann.* 31. See Hornblower (2016).
57   Lyk. *Alex.* 853; Pliny *NH* 3.95.
58   For suggestions about Lykophron's target audience, see Hornblower (2018), ch. 7.
59   See above, n. 33; *FRHist* 5 Cato fr. 64; *FGrHist* 244 Apollodoros F167; Virg. *Aen.* 3.402-3: *ducis Meliboei/parva Philoctetae subnixa Petelia muro*.
60   Bowersock (1990), 55-76.
61   Toynbee (1965), vol. 1, 100.

exchanged Roman for Carthaginian control in the Second Punic War, after Cannae in 216 BCE. Once Petelia had fallen to Himilco, Kroton could not hold out. The city was now evacuated completely.[62] It was in relation to Kroton in 215 BCE that Livy made his famous but vulnerable generalisation on class lines: after Cannae, 'all the Italian cities were infected by a kind of disease, so that a division of opinion opened up between *optimates* and *plebes*: the senate favoured the Romans, the plebs inclined towards the Carthaginians'.[63] The Romans did not recover the city until near the end of the war, although the precise date is not recorded. Krotoniate territory was actually and symbolically an important base for Hannibal; Niese called Kroton his *Hauptwaffenplatz*, his chief military arsenal,[64] although (as we have seen) his actual camp was at Skylletion to the south. As late as 205 BCE, Hannibal is said to have inscribed the details of his past and present military forces, and perhaps of his achievements, *res gestae*, on a bilingual (Greek and Punic, but not Latin) bronze tablet at the temple of Hera (Juno) Lacinia, the city sanctuary of Kroton. Polybius consulted this document, the composition of which was surely an act of farewell by Hannibal, at a time when he must have been conscious of staring failure in the face.[65] The sanctuary was a great religious centre, more famous than Kroton itself, and not confined to Hera's worship. Lykophron makes Kassandra describe a festival of mourning there for Achilles, ordained by Hera because Achilles' mother Thetis gave Hera the land on which the temple complex was built; the passage implies that the ritual continued until the poet's own time ('an eternal law' ordaining the cult for the local women, lines 859-60).

I now return to the small Roman citizen colony sent to Croton in 194 BCE. It is most unlikely to have had a military purpose: the number of colonists (three hundred) was far too small. Rather, it was symbolic: the Rhodians had failed to establish a colonial presence in S. Italy, but their Roman allies now inherited the role of metropolis, just as the victorious Romans redeemed the fall of their mother-city Troy. Other Roman colonies sent out in the 190s were topical in the same way: Croton, Sipontum, Tempsa/Temesa, all of them Lykophronic places; that is, they feature in the *Alexandra*.[66]

Kroton's neighbour inland Petelia, Greek Πετηλία, is not named directly in the *Alexandra*, though it would have fitted into an iambic trimeter, and was small enough for naming, according to Kassandra's principle that riddling periphrasis is appropriate only for larger and better-known places. But when Virgil associated Philoktetes with Petelia rather than Croton, and Strabo called it a foundation of Philoktetes, κτίσμα Φιλοκτήτου, they meant the same as Lykophron did when he wrote of Philoktetes at Kroton and Makalla.[67] Historians remembered Petelia for something else, its loyalty to Rome in the Hannibalic war, when Petelia held out gallantly though unsuccessfully, capitulating only under pressure of extreme hunger. It is possible that Lykophron did

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[62]   Toynbee (1965), vol. 2, 16-17.
[63]   Livy 24.2.
[64]   Niese (1893-1903), vol. 2, 554
[65]   Pol. 3.33.18, 56.4; Livy 28.46.16.
[66]   *MRR* vol. 1, 334-5, 345, 349, 351; Lyk. *Alex*. 1002 and 1071 (Kroton, and see above); 592 (Argyrippa/Arpi, whose territory was used for the colony at Sipontum, Livy 34.45.2); 1067 (Teme(s)sa/Tempsa).
[67]   Above, n. 59.

after all introduce Petelia into Kassandra's prophecy, by an indirect allusion to its sufferings in 215 BCE. Kassandra's description of Xerxes' defeated and retreating army chewing the bark of trees is modelled on Herodotus' narrative of Xerxes' retreat; the vocabulary is closely similar. But not everything has to come from a book or a predecessor, and the vivid bark-chewing detail is found in Livy's narratives about Petelia. The loyally starving Peteliti were an event in Lykophron's youth, and will have been remembered locally. The allusion is a historical fact, presented in Herodotean clothing.[68]

Some of this has been speculative. By contrast, the Aineias section of the *Alexandra* has always been recognized for its importance as a history of early Rome and Latium. This theme — Roman descent from Trojan refugees — was captured so effectively by Virgil that it is easy to overlook that Lykophron got there first among poets by a long margin, even on the late date here adopted for the poem. If the poem is dated a century earlier, to the time of Ptolemy Philadelphos, the margin will be even longer. For example, the stories of the eating of the tables and the sow with thirty piglets appear in Lykophron for the first time in a fully preserved author;[69] and the twins Romulus and Remus make what is a very early appearance in a Greek writer. We now know from a library catalogue from Tauromenion that Fabius Pictor mentioned them in the late third century BCE.[70] They are also depicted on Roman silver coins of the earlier third century, and this is perhaps where Lykophron first came across the legend. (Roman silver coins began to circulate freely in the peninsula after the Samnite Wars, about 300 BCE.) Even a poet as learned as Lykophron did not get all his historical material from literary sources like Herodotus, Timaios or Hieronymos. Be that as it may, the Trojan descent of Rome was thus merged with a more modern and local version of the Roman foundation myth.

The foundation myths of Rome and their historical value are beyond the scope of this article. I single out only a few details from the Roman sections of the poem which relate to the Hannibalic War period. At the end of her prophecy, Lykophron makes Trojan Kassandra acclaim the military and diplomatic achievement of her kinsman. This (see above p. 55) is best taken as a reference to Flamininus, who in an inscribed epigram at Delphi actually called himself a descendant of Aineias. Wiseman has pointed out that the family of another victorious Roman of this period, the *novus homo* Manius Acilius Glabrio, also claimed descent from Aineias. Glabrio, during his consulship of 192 BCE, defeated Antiochos at the battle of Thermopylai, and was on terms of friendly rivalry with Flamininus. The evidence for Glabrio's claim is a late but good historian Herodian. He was a *novus homo*, and thus likely to have been the first of his family to make the claim, thus improving his credentials. It is appealing to suppose that this kind of claim was topical in the 190s, just when on my view Lykophron was writing and collecting his material. [71]

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68   Pol. 7.1; Livy 23.30.1-4; Toynbee (1965), vol. 2, 20-21. Cf. Hdt. 8.115.2.
69   Fabius Pictor, writing towards the end of the third century BC, knew of the sow and piglets (*FRHist* 1 F 3), and it featured in Dion. Hal. 1.55 (Augustan, but using earlier writers — including Lyk.?).
70   *FRHist* 1 F 4 and T 14.
71   Plut. *Flam.* 12.11 (*FGE* 1760); Herodian 2.3.4; Wiseman 1987: 211

I end with a last example of sisterhood between cities, horizontal kinship. There are actually five cities in the frame. Two are Troy and Rome, whose direct kinship via Aineias is the main element. The other three are the Elymian cities of western Sicily: Eryx, Entella and above all Egesta. For Thucydides, there were only two Elymian cities, Eryx and Egesta; this is correct, in that Entella was the last in time to achieve prominence. All three Elymian cities claimed Trojan ancestry, and so were 'sisters' of Rome, in the sense I have used above. Livy describes how the patron goddess of Eryx, Venus Erycina, lightened a dark hour of Roman history, Hannibal's defeat at Lake Trasimene in 217 BCE of the consul Gaius Flaminius (not to be confused with Flamininus). The Romans were ordered by the Sibylline Books to vow a temple to Venus Erycina and Mens. Two years later, Q. Fabius Maximus dedicated a new temple to this Venus on the Capitol.[72] As Erskine well says, 'Trojan kinship may have been a factor: it meant the Romans had a better right to the goddess than the Carthaginians'.[73] To be sure, Apollonios and Kallimachos also mentioned Eryx; but they show no awareness of Troy, Carthage or the first Punic War.[74]

But it is above all Egesta which evokes Kassandra's pity: Αἴγεστα τλῆμον, she cries, 'wretched Egesta'; the language here replicates her earlier cry of pity for her own fatherland of Troy,[75] and thus neatly makes the point that Egesta is, like Rome, another Troy and is wretched because of the fall of Troy the mother-city. As Gruen in particular has shown, the original context of the myth of Egesta as Trojan was the 260s, the First Punic War: the Romans vitally needed allies in Sicily.[76]

We saw (above, p. 49) that Pindar's Medea may have alluded obscurely and by pseudo-prophecy to the historical founding of Kyrene. But Lykophron's volume of historical colonial Greek material, presented as prophecy, is far greater than this. And for some episodes about the founding of Rome for which Dionysios of Halikarnassos and Virgil are usually cited, Lykophron's *Alexandra* is the first fully surviving literary evidence, and may even have been the source for the other two. As for contemporary politics, the above discussion about Hannibal is speculative in varying degrees. But there is no doubt that the closing parts of the poem about the Roman conquest of Greece — the unique kinsman and so on — are the work of a profoundly political poet, and I would say a kind of historian.

5. But is this History?

It may be protested that much, perhaps too much, depends on what definition of 'historian' we are using. Obviously, it would be easy to insist on definitions that would knock out the *Alexandra*. Polybius, in what amounts to a didactic monograph (his Book 12 in its entirety), thought that history should be written by men of action, and that to write about war and politics demanded experience of both.[77] We have no idea whether

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[72]   Lyk. *Alex.* 964; Thuc. 6.2.3; *SEG* 30.1117-23 (Hellenistic inscriptions from Entella); Livy 23.30.13 with *MRR* vol. 1, 257 (Venus Erycina).

[73]   Erskine (2001), 202; see also Palmer (1997), 54, 62, 66-7.

[74]   Ap. Rh. 4.917-8 (Eryx) with Sider no. 8 (J. Murray): 97; Kall. fr. 43. 53

[75]   Lyk. *Alex.* 968, cf. 31, where the 'wretched nurse' (τάλαινα θηλαμών) is Troy.

[76]   Gruen (1990), 12-13 and (1993), 44-5.

[77]   Pol. 12.28.1-4 and 25g.1.

Lykophron held public office (an interesting thought!); but it is certain that the *Alexandra* would be of little use as a statesman's manual.

Gibbon in chapter 3 of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* defined history as 'little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind', and this is not a bad description of the *Alexandra*, once we accept that the author's subject is mankind of the real and not only the mythical sort.

If, more seriously, we demand with Sempronius Asellio[78] an explicit attention to causation and motive as part of the criterion for the title of historian,[79] then Lykophron's claims are less obvious. But the pseudo-prediction that 'all Greece will groan for the crime of one man', i.e. Ajax's sacrilegious assault of Kassandra (line 365), is programmatic, an advance explanation of the sufferings of the returning Greek heroes after the Trojan War: see above for the *nostoi* narrative. Such statements of divine vengeance for human offences are occasionally found in Herodotus too: consider his emphatic comment on the disapproval of the gods for the excessive punishment administered by Pheretime on her enemies.[80] As for the consequences of this divine vengeance, much of the *Alexandra*, but especially the narratives of partial or failed *nostoi*, can be seen as an answer to the question, how did Greeks come to be settled round the Mediterranean zone?[81]

A related criterion is Time[82] (for A to cause B it must be earlier in time, if only fractionally). Does the author have a sophisticated awareness of the sequence of events and a sense of chronological structure and of periodization? These are basic requirements for any story narrative. Homer is a kind of precursor in this respect, when he speaks of his heroes lifting rocks which two mortal men of the present time, οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσι, could not lift.[83] Apollonios' *Argonautika* is not only an orderly sequential

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[78]   'I do not see it as satisfactory simply to announce what was done (*quod factum est*): it is necessary also to show with what purposes and according to what plan (*quo consilio quaque ratione*) things were accomplished'. For this famous statement of method, see *FRHist* 20 F1 (from Aulus Gellius), with *FRHist* vol. 1 (M. M. Popjoy), 276: 'history should not simply list events but should explain how things happened, including the plans and purposes of those involved…'.

[79]   Polybius, in another mood and another book of his history, denounced his sensationalist predecessor Phylarchos for neglecting causes: 2.56.13, part of another didactic passage which is, however, more than a mere attack on 'tragic history'. Marincola (2013), 80, correctly insists on the importance of this sentence, and denies that Polybius was opposed to emotional portrayals in history *per se*. They were all right if they were appropriate and causally motivated. If Polybius had read the *Alexandra* — and perhaps he did, see below — he would not have objected to Kassandra's laments for her beloved Troy and Hektor. They were entirely appropriate.

[80]   See Pelling (forthcoming). For Pheretime, see Hdt. 4.205.

[81]   For the traditions about the settlement process, which are a blend of myth, history and archaeology, see Malkin (1998) and (2011); and for failed and partial *nostoi* see Hornblower and Biffis (2018), esp. ch. 11 (N. Mac Sweeney).

[82]   I am grateful to Jonathan Price for raising this point after the oral delivery of the lecture from which this article originates (above n.1).

[83]   *Il*. 5.303-4, 12.445-9, 20.286-7. Somewhat different is *Il*. 12.34-5: that is how Poseidon and Apollo would at a later time, ὄπισθε, deal with the man-made wall (i.e. destroy it). Note also

narrative: we have seen above that it also discriminates precisely and punctiliously between the (mythical) time of the events narrated and future (historical) time, what will happen μετόπισθε. Kallimachos also knows how to register a shift from the mythical time of a poem's setting to 'later' i.e. historical time. He does so, as we have briefly noted already (p. 51), by the more obvious technique of pseudo-prophecy. In the *Hymn to Delos* (*Hymn 4*), Leto's son Apollo foresees that a Ptolemy (II, Philadelphos) will one day be born on Kos (lines 165-6), and that at a time *later* than the divine speaker's, ὕστερον (line 172), there will be a common struggle: the wars against the Galatians in the third century BCE.[84] Lykophron's *Alexandra* is the most ambitious sequential narrative of all, covering as it does the entire period from before the main Trojan war to the Roman conquest of Greece; the — part mythical part historical — colonization of Asia Minor and the activities of Midas (also part mythical, part historical, see above, p. 54) are placed carefully and accurately in the period before the Persian wars (lines 1369-1408). Coverage and distribution of attention are uneven, to be sure. The Ionian Revolt is a curious absentee, given that Herodotus (5.102.1) had stressed that the Persian burning of the temples of Greece were in reprisal for the Greek burning of Sardis during the Revolt, and this would have fitted well into Kassandra's scheme of reciprocal conflict between Europe and Asia (1283-4;1412). Xerxes's invasion is narrated in detail, as we have seen; but Kassandra then scampers through the Classical period to Alexander the Great with a mere half dozen words of Greek: 'many struggles, and much slaughter in the interval' (line 1435). But perhaps the most interesting demonstration of temporal sophistication comes not in the main historical narrative but in a line about Kassandra's own death at the hands of Klytaimestra and in the company of Agamemnon: 'I will die with him, and then, tossed around among the dead,/I will hear everything that I am about to narrate' (1372-3).[85] She is here carefully and helpfully explaining how it is possible for her to know about events still in the future at the time of her death (answer: she will hear about them when she is among the dead). It is curious that a woman consciously possessed of prophetic powers should find it necessary to provide such an explanation. Is she here thinking of the Aeschylean tradition[86] that Apollo punished her obstinate virginity by rendering her prophecies incredible? At the end of her speech, she mentions this punishment herself, while insisting on the truthfulness of her predictions (1454-6).

Again, if we require that a historian must acknowledge and adjudicate between sources explicitly, Lykophron would fail the test. But so for the most part would Thucydides, who — unlike Herodotus and Polybius — very rarely gives alternative versions, or admits to doubt.[87] Kallimachos, by contrast, would pass the

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a reverse temporal indicator: Athena picks up a stone which *men of an earlier time*, ἄνδρες πρότεροι, had left there as a boundary (*Il*. 21.405).

[84]   For which see above, nn. 12 and 13.

[85]   σὺν ὧι θανοῦμαι, κἂν νεκροῖς στρωφωμένη/τὰ λοιπ᾿ ἀκούσω ταῦθ᾿, ἃ νῦν μέλλω θροεῖν.

[86]   See *Ag*. 1212.

[87]   The dismissal of Hellanikos for chronological inaccuracy at 1.97.2 hardly counts as a source-citation. Otherwise he makes some supporting use of Homer in the *Archaeology*, and of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (which he regards as Homeric) at 3.104. He is notoriously reluctant to provide, and still to choose between, rival versions, but see 2.5.6 (rival versions; no adjudication) and 4.122.4-6 (adjudication). Even admissions of doubt or uncertainty are rare: Hornblower (1994) 152 n.57.

'acknowledgement' test; see above p. 48 for his citation of Xenomedes. A more demanding criterion is, the carrying out of independent critical research. That Lykophron used Herodotus and Timaios is virtually certain,[88] but did he conduct his own investigations and make oral inquiries? I have argued above (p. 57 and n. 53) that he possibly did make the rounds of sacred sites in Magna Graecia, and that his knowledge of Roman myths was not entirely bookish. (See also above p. 60 for coin-motifs).

Aristotle in the *Poetics* — 'that unsatisfactory book', as Bernard Williams called it — famously distinguished between history and poetry. But his reasons were poor: poetry, he thought, 'tends to concern itself with the universal, history with the particular… with what Alcibiades did and suffered'. As if there is no generalisation in Thucydides![89] (Who seems to be in Aristotle's mind at that point, judging by the reference to Alcibiades).

Again, it might be maintained that myth has no place in history, a large topic.[90] A famous programmatic statement of Thucydides rejected τὸ μυθῶδες (1.22.2), but in practice he was more hospitable to myth than that might seem to imply. He merely took care as a general rule to preface such material with distancing 'it is said' formulae, like that which introduces the remarkable story of Alkmeon's matricide and the consequent pollution at the end of book 2 (102.5). It goes without saying that the balance between myth and history is managed in vastly different ways by Thucydides, Herodotus and Polybius on the one hand and Lykophron on the other. But the latter narrates Xerxes' invasion with an evident eye on Herodotus, not to mention the culminating allusion to the victory of that Polybian figure Flamininus.

It is with Polybius that we may end this discussion. Through the mouth of Kassandra, the poet pretends to foretell future Roman 'sceptre and monarchy of land and sea', *γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης* σκῆπτρα καὶ μοναρχίαν (1229). This comes towards the end of her long prophecy. Polybius, in strikingly similar language but at the outset of his great work, explained that he wished nobody to be in any doubt 'by what power and resources the Romans embarked on that enterprise which made them lords over land and sea', ποίοις διαβουλίοις ἢ ποίαις δυνάμεσι καὶ χορηγίαις χρησάμενοι Ῥωμαῖοι πρὸς ταύτας ὥρμησαν τὰς ἐπιβολάς, δι᾽ ὧν καὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ τῆς θαλάττης τῆς καθ᾽ἡμᾶς ἐγένοντο πάσης ἐγκρατεῖς (1.3.9). The poet and the prose historian were both moved, in their own very different ways, to come to terms with the fact of universal Roman power, a phenomenon which they viewed positively.[91] They both did so by tracing the line which led from the distant past to the present.[92] Both of them had a political *point of view*: they were historians, not mere chroniclers or assemblers of facts.

Of the poets reviewed in this article, Lykophron arguably comes closest to deserving the title of historian. First, because of his direct and also (as I have argued) indirect but

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88   And perhaps also Hieronymos. See above p. 54 and 60.
89   Ar. *Poet.* 1451a-b; Williams (1993), 213 n. 35.
90   On epiphanies in Herodotus, including that of the mythical Helen at 6.61.3, see above n. 9.
91   Unlike the authors of the Sibylline Oracles. See Hornblower (2008), ch. 5.
92   There may even have been some overlap in narrative subject-matter. The early part of Polybius' Book 6 known as the 'Roman Archaeology' survives only in fragments, but it is clear that it took Roman history back to its mythical origins: 6.11a1.

ascertainable and politically engaged handling of events and personalities of the real past, some of them very recent (Hannibal). And second, because of his creation of an architecturally complex, tight and formidable narrative structure, which culminates in one of the decisive battles of the ancient world.

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Abbreviations

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