

HERMESIANAX'S POETICS OF LOVE IN CONTEXT

ABSTRACT

The article focusses on the catalogue of love-affairs from Book 3 of Hermesianax's Leontion (fr. 7 Powell = 3 Lightfoot). Contrary to two basic assumptions of previous scholarship, this article underscores that fr. 3 Lightfoot is neither representative of the Leontion as a whole nor an instance of unsophisticated poetic production. The evidence indicates that Hermesianax's catalogue might have played a crucial role in shaping the later reception of some of the figures he portrays (Mimnermus, Antimachus and perhaps even Hesiod). Finally, several points of contact with Clearchus of Soli show that Hermesianax may be engaging with relevant aspects of contemporary culture, most of all the Peripatetic investigation of biography and the phenomenology of love.

Keywords: elegy; Hellenistic poetry; Hermesianax; Aristotle; Callimachus; Hesiod

Our knowledge of Hermesianax of Colophon's poetic production is restricted to a limited number of fragments.¹ He is mostly known for his *Leontion*, an elegiac poem in three books that in ancient sources appears dedicated to the female figure from whom it takes its title. Only one of the poem's fragments is of substantial size (98 lines), namely the 'catalogue of love-affairs' (κατάλογον ... ἐρωτικῶν) from Book 3 of his *Leontion*, preserved by Athenaeus.² Hermesianax offers here an overview of Greek poetry and (to a lesser extent) philosophy from a particular standpoint. Each poet and philosopher is described in a short narrative centred on erotic passion and its consequences. The first two stories are unsurprising. The catalogue begins with Orpheus descending to Hades and persuading the gods of the underworld to let his wife Agriope regain life (1–14).³ After that, poets appear for the most part in love with female characters more or less creatively drawn from their poems. It is not too startling to find Mimnermus (35–40) 'burning' for Nanno (37) and Antimachus (41–6) 'struck with passion for Lydian Lyde' (41–2). The depiction of Homer in love with Penelope, though, is unprecedented (27–34). For her, he set 'delicate (λεπτὴν) Ithaca to verse' (29–30) and 'hymned Icarus' race, Amyclas' town and Sparta, touching on his distress' (33–4). This probably

¹ The inclusion of Hermesianax in J.L. Lightfoot, *Hellenistic Collection: Philotas, Alexander of Aetolia, Hermesianax, Euphorion, Parthenius* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2009) has brought new attention to the poet (see G. D'Alessio, *BMCR* 2011.05.62); see recently also R.J. Gallé Cejudo, *Elegiacos helenísticos* (Madrid, 2021), 173–250. In this paper I cite Hermesianax's fragments and their translations from Lightfoot's edition. Unless otherwise indicated, all ancient dates are B.C.E.

² *Deipn.* 13.597a–b = fr. 3 L. = 7 P. The size of this fragment has no parallel in extant Hellenistic elegy. A comparable, but shorter example is Alex. Aet. fr. 3 Magnelli, thirty-four lines on the story of Antheus. On the principles informing the structure of Hermesianax fr. 3 see T. Gärtner, 'Der Erotikerkatalog in der Elegie „Leontion“ des Hermesianax von Kolophon: Überlegungen zu Aufbau und Überlieferung', *ZPE* 180 (2012), 77–103.

³ Cf. Eur. *Alc.* 357–62; Isoc. 11.8. See M.A. Tueller, 'An allusive reading of the Orpheus episode in Hermesianax fr. 7', *CB* 83 (2007), 93–108.

refers to the common ancestry shared by Penelope and Helen;⁴ both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are thus ultimately traced back to Homer's love for Penelope. In *Op.* 633–40 Hesiod famously recounts that his father left Aeolian Kyme, fleeing from 'wretched poverty' (κακὴν πένιν, 638), and settled near Helicon in the 'wretched village' (οἰζυρὴ ἐνὶ κόμῃ, 639) of Ascra. In Hermesianax, by contrast, it is Hesiod himself who leaves his home and comes to Ascra⁵ in order to woo Eoie or rather 'Dawn' (Hoῖν μνώμεος, 24), a girl whose name is an obvious play on the formula ἡ οἷν employed in the *Catalogue of Women*.⁶ If archaic epic poetry leaves little room for the exploration of love *qua* poetic subject, here the genre's most distinguished representatives are turned into '(crypto-)love poets'.⁷ A similar process of biographical and/or textual distortion is extended to all other poets included in the catalogue. For each of them, Hermesianax provides us with a sketch built around some detail ultimately taken from their works. These stories are often preposterous or absurd, which is exactly how they are meant to be perceived. On the other hand, Hermesianax deals with philosophers in a different and perhaps less extravagant fashion. Socrates, for instance, is in love with Aspasia (89–94), who is mostly known for her intellectual prowess and for her liaison with Pericles. Both Plato and Aeschines have Socrates meeting with Aspasia and learning from her.⁸ In this case, then, Hermesianax's narrative has turned a 'historical' interaction into a love story.

How are we to interpret this fragment? Until fairly recently, critics have not really capitalized on the rare luxury represented by such a sizeable portion of Hellenistic elegy. Rather, they have looked at Hermesianax primarily within an interpretative framework that attributed to Callimachus a decisive role both in the evaluation of the literary past and in the establishment of a new poetics that was technically refined and intellectually elitist. This approach placed great emphasis on the supposed gap between Callimachus and the 'others' in terms of style and aesthetics.⁹ The following pages will explore a different line of investigation by rooting Hermesianax's poetic

⁴ Tyndareus, Helen's father, was the brother of Icarius, Penelope's father; Tyndareus and Icarius were sons of Perieres and thus grandsons of Amyclas (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.10.3–4).

⁵ Note the allusive parallels ἀποπρολιπόντα (21) ~ προλιπόν (*Op.* 636), Ἀσκραίων ... Ἐλικωνίδα κόμην (23) ~ Ἐλικώνος οἰζυρὴ ἐνὶ κόμῃ, | Ἀσκη (*Op.* 639–40).

⁶ Following a suggestion of C.L. Caspers, 'The loves of the poets: Allusions in Hermesianax fr. 7 Powell', in M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit and G.C. Wakker (edd.), *Beyond the Canon* (Leuven, 2006), 21–42, at 23, I translate 'Hoῖn as 'Dawn' since in Greek it can be understood as a form of the adjective ἡοῖος (Attic ἑωός) 'of the morning'/'eastern'.

⁷ Caspers (n. 6), 25.

⁸ Plato's *Menexenus* consists almost entirely of the text of a funeral speech composed by Aspasia and recited by Socrates. Works entitled *Aspasia* are attested for Aeschines of Sphettos (*SSR* VI A 59–72, fr. 15–33 Dittmar; a dialogue) and Antisthenes (*SSR* V A 142–3, *FGrHist* 1004 F 7a–c; probably not a formal biography but rather a moral treatise providing ample information about her, particularly for her association with Pericles). See also *Ar. Ach.* 523–38; *Plut. Per.* 24; *Harp.* s.v. Ἀσπασία; schol. *Pl. Menex.* 235e. If Aeschines portrayed Aspasia as a teacher of conjugal virtues (*SSR* VI A 70–1 = fr. 31–2 Dittmar), by contrast Herodotus of Babylon has her giving love advice to a Socrates madly in love with Alcibiades (fr. 12 Broggiato).

⁹ Cameron's verdict encapsulates this view: 'Another big lady was the *Leontion* [...] of Hermesianax. The one surviving fragment, from Bk III, is much the most crudely Hesiodic poem to have survived from the golden age of Hellenistic literature', 'monotonous' and 'mechanical' in the treatment of its subject (A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* [Princeton, 1995], 381, 383). For K. Spanoudakis (*Philittas of Cos* [Leiden, 2002], 30) our fragment 'displays little poetic charisma'; J.L. Lightfoot, *Parthenius of Nicaea: The Poetical Fragments and the Ἐρωτικά Παθήματα* (Oxford, 1999), 24 finds it difficult 'to regret the loss of the rest of the poem, except as curiosity value'.

experiment within the literary culture of the fourth and third century B.C.E. This will prevent us from giving in to a biased ‘othering’ of Hermesianax—a pitfall for the criticism of Hellenistic poetry of which we have grown increasingly aware in recent years.

From this perspective, the first question we need to consider is to what extent our fragment is representative of the *Leontion* as a whole. There is no evidence that the catalogic structure of fr. 3 L. = 7 P. informed all three books of the poem.¹⁰ The very structure of this fragment suggests that Athenaeus has excerpted it as a self-contained unit. The list of the twelve poets is meticulously organized: it is arranged in chronological order and in pairs, covers most of the main genres of Greek poetry (epic, elegy, lyric, drama) and ends with a contemporary figure, Philitas of Cos (75–8), c. 340–280 B.C.E. Furthermore, beginning as it does with Orpheus and Musaeus, it encompasses both myth and history: it is designed to be all-inclusive. The second list, on the other hand, while maintaining a similar chronological order, is not organized in pairs and consists of just three philosophers, the last one (95–8) being Aristippus of Cyrene (c. 435–360). Even admitting that Athenaeus has cut it short, the philosophers’ catalogue cannot have matched, in terms of length and structure, the poets’ catalogue. This indicates that, in broad terms, in this part of Book 3 of the *Leontion* ‘philosophy’ appears as a coda to ‘poetry’. Why do we find this coda here? One possible answer may be related to our fragment being from the last book of the poem. As Kelly has argued with respect to extant early epic poems, a rather consistent strategy of closure at work in these poems is to present a concluding narrative doublet that closely recalls a larger and more elaborated section of the poem.¹¹ Such ‘decreasing doublets’, as Kelly names them, are employed in order (a) to direct the audience towards the larger (and prior) element as the more significant and (b) to discourage the audience from expecting continuation. With all the caution required by the fact that we are not dealing with an orally-derived work, Kelly’s analysis may offer a valuable insight into the peculiar nature of Hermesianax’s double catalogue. It invites us to take the philosophers’ list as a decreasing doublet. As such, while establishing a close connection between poets and philosophers in matters of erotic suffering, it effectively marks the poets’ list as the more relevant of the two. The close connection between the two groups also serves to foreground a crucial difference. Only for poets does love provide ‘professional’ inspiration, as is particularly clear in the case of Hesiod and Eoie/‘Dawn’ (25), Homer and Penelope (29–34), Antimachus and Lyde (45–6), Alcaeus and Sappho (47–8), and Philitas and Bittis (77–8). When it comes to philosophers, however, love has strong connotations of intensity and madness. They cannot shun its maddening force (οὐδ’ οἷδ’ αἰνὸν ἔρωτος ἀπεστρέψαντο κυδοιμὸν | μαινομένου, 83–4), which in fact controls them as a ‘dreaded charioteer’ (δεινὸν ... ἡνίοχον, 84); madness (μάνη, 85) strikes Pythagoras and an angry Aphrodite burns Socrates (Κύπρις μηνίουςα πυρὸς μένει, 91).¹² In a consistent fashion, it brings havoc in their lives and marks a point of no return. As a result, it plays no part in the process

¹⁰ Athenaeus simply states that in Book 3 Hermesianax presents a catalogue of love-affairs; this does not mean, of course, that the entire poem was a catalogue; see V.J. Matthews, *Antimachus of Colophon: Text and Commentary* (Leiden, 1996), 35; H. Asquith, ‘From genealogy to *Catalogue*: the Hellenistic adaptation of the Hesiodic catalogue form’, in R.L. Hunter (ed.), *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: Constructions and Reconstructions* (Cambridge, 2005), 266–86, at 281.

¹¹ A. Kelly, ‘How to end an orally-derived epic poem’, *TAPhA* 137 (2007), 371–402.

¹² The image of the charioteer has important precedents both in poetry (e.g. Thgn. 260, 1251, 1268; Anac. fr. 360.4 Bernsdorff) and in philosophy, most notably in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (246a1–257b6). On the peculiar characteristics of the philosophers’ catalogue (as opposed to the poets’) see further

that leads to their philosophical works or to their discoveries in other fields (80–4, 87–8). On the contrary, it is at odds with their intellectual paths. It is tempting to see in this difference a metadiscursive statement: however much philosophy may claim to offer rational tools to understand the complexity of the world and improve human life, it is ultimately defenceless against love, that love which in Hermesianax's catalogue turns out to be the very essence of all forms of poetry.¹³

A distinctive feature of Hermesianax's catalogue is its addressee: on a few occasions the narrator addresses a female figure only to remark that she is familiar with some of the poets and their *œuvre*. She is acquainted with Alcaeus (Λέσβιος Ἀλκαῖος ... γινώσκεις, 47–9), Philoxenus of Cythera (ἄνδρα δὲ τὸν Κυθήρηθεν ... γινώσκεις, αἰούσα μέγαν πῶθον κτλ., 69–73), and Philitas of Cos (οἴσθα δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἀοιδὸν κτλ., 75). We have no information on the identity of this woman, but it is not unlikely that she may be Leontion herself.¹⁴ Some scholars associate her presence with the exemplary and personal nature of the catalogue, which in their opinion would be ultimately designed to illustrate the power of love from the point of view of Hermesianax's own experience.¹⁵ Admittedly, nothing in our fragment explicitly betrays that the narrator may be sharing in the sorrows of his characters (particularly evident at lines 25, 31, 35, 41–2, 63–4, 91), but this might have been an easy assumption for anyone who had access to the whole *Leontion*. In this regard, it may be relevant that all the stories included in the catalogue are stories of heterosexual love.¹⁶ Remarkably, even Sappho appears only as the love interest for which Alcaeus and Anacreon contend (47–56). She is somewhat ambiguously portrayed as 'arrayed among the many Lesbians' (στελλομένην πολλαῖς ἄμμιγα Λεσβιάσιν, 52), but there is no reference to Sappho's own erotic passion in this context.¹⁷ In all likelihood, such an exclusive focus on

Gärtner (n. 2), 86–8. As Gärtner remarks, the love experienced by Hermesianax's philosophers has a significant parallel in the story of Euripides (61–8) in the poets' section.

¹³ On a more general level, however we understand the connection between poets and philosophers, our fragment offers no guidance about the overall structure of the poem and its thematic arrangement. Scholars have suggested several hypotheses. N. Bach, *Philetai Coi, Hermesianactis Colophonii atque Phanoclis reliquiae* (Halle, 1829), 95–6 speculated that the loves of Daphnis and Menalcas belonged to Book 1 because the Cyclops (fr. 1 L. = 1 P.) appeared in that book (cf. Lightfoot [n. 1], 176). By a similar reasoning, R. Schulze, *Quaestiones Hermesianactae* (Leipzig, 1858), 35–6 connected to the only fragment explicitly ascribed to Book 2 (on Arceophon) a few other stories (Leucippus, Eurytion, Attis) under the label 'unrequited love'. Even though this was mere guesswork, it left its mark on Powell's edition: he grouped together the fragments about mythical shepherds (his frs. 1–3) and hesitantly ascribed the references in Parthenius' *Sufferings in Love* (his frs. 5 and 6) to Book 2, placing them before the long extract from Book 3 (his fr. 7). The arrangement in Lightfoot's edition is judiciously more cautious.

¹⁴ See Lightfoot (n. 9), 32.

¹⁵ See O. Ellenberger, *Quaestiones Hermesianactae* (Giessen, 1907), 65–6; A. Körte and P. Händel, *Die hellenistische Dichtung* (Stuttgart, 1960²), 260; G. Luck, *The Latin Love Elegy* (London, 1969²), 40; G. Serrao, 'La struttura della *Lide* di Antimaco e la critica callimachea', *QUCC* 32 (1979), 91–8, at 93–4; L. Nicastrì, *Cornelio Gallo e l'elegia ellenistico-romana* (Naples, 1984), 53–4; P. Cutolo, 'Teocrito, il catalogo elegiaco e l'elegia ellenistico-romana', *Orpheus* 18 (1997), 442–58, at 446; L. Sbardella, *Filila: Testimonianze e frammenti poetici* (Rome, 2000), 86; F. Cairns, 'Propertius and the origins of Latin love-elegy', in H.-C. Günther (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Propertius* (Leiden, 2006), 69–95, at 74.

¹⁶ The one instance which remains unclear is Archelaus' 'housekeeper' (ταμίην, 66), whom Euripides pursues across Macedonia. The word (which occurs again only four lines below) may be corrupt: see D. Sider, 'Hermesianax', in D. Sider (ed.), *Hellenistic Poetry: A Selection* (Ann Arbor, 2017), 322–38, at 334.

¹⁷ ἄμμιγα, however, evokes the metaphor of 'mixing' and its sexual undertones, as remarked by Sider (n. 16), 332.

heterosexual love is intimately related to the nature of the ‘conversation’ that is taking place between the narrator and his addressee. Besides, the specific emphasis on her familiarity with the poets’ works at least to some extent evokes the appeal to the Muse’s knowledge, particularly in its traditional form in Homeric and in lyric poetry.¹⁸ In this respect, then, Hermesianax looks like his ‘Muse’, who is both a learned interlocutor and the woman he loves—thus the ‘inspiration’ for his poetry.

The catalogic structure of the fragment and its possible address to Leontion are commonly read as markers of the poem’s literary ancestry, which is traced back both to the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* and to the tradition of love elegy represented by Mimnermus’ *Nanno* and especially Antimachus’ *Lyde*.¹⁹ We saw earlier that Hermesianax introduces Hesiod’s love for ‘Hoīη (24) by rewriting and romanticizing the poet’s autobiography narrated in the *Works and Days*: Hesiod ‘composed whole catalogues in homage, with the girl heading the list’ (ἐκ πρώτης παιδὸς ἀνερχόμενος, 25–6).²⁰ ‘Hermesianax represents the *Catalogue* as a series of episodes all beginning ἢ οἴη’,²¹ then, but this formula is avoided at the beginning of both lists of poets and philosophers, where we find the less characteristic οἴη(ν) μὲν (οἴην μὲν ... Ἀγρίοπην, 1–2; οἴη μὲν ... μανίη, 85).²² The use of these phrases may nod to the *Catalogue*²³ but, as R. Hunter has remarked, ‘there is nothing particularly Hesiodic about Hermesianax’s style or language; far from it, in fact. The *Leontion* shows that the *Catalogue* was known, not necessarily that it was closely read.’²⁴ In fact, the idea that Hermesianax was following closely in the footsteps of Hesiod’s *Catalogue* predates the age of papyrological discoveries.²⁵ While improving our knowledge of the archaic text, papyri have also revealed that Hermesianax’s representation and adaptation of the Hesiodic poem betray a substantial degree of simplification.²⁶ As a matter of fact, the

¹⁸ For epic poetry see in particular Hom. *Il.* 2.484–92 (note also, at least, Hes. *Theog.* 27–8); for lyric poetry see e.g. Pind. *Pae.* 6.54–61 (see also Timotheus’ *Persians*, fr. 791.202–40 Hordern). Cf., in a broader perspective, the dialogue with the Muses framing Books 1 and 2 of Callimachus’ *Aetia*. P. Bing, ‘The *Bios*-tradition and poets’ lives in Hellenistic poetry’, in R.M. Rosen and J. Farrell (edd.), *Nomodeiktes: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald* (Ann Arbor, 1993), 619–31, at 630, stresses that the ‘asides to Leontion’ must refer to ‘previously available sources’, as such contrasted with the narrator’s first-person declarations at lines 21 and 61 (see n. 29).

¹⁹ Hesiod’s *Catalogue*: F. Jacoby, ‘Zur Entstehung der römischen Elegie’, *RhM* 60 (1905), 38–105, at 47–8; C. Giarratano, *Hermesianactis fragmenta* (Milan, 1905), 5; S. Hinds, ‘First among women: Ovid, *Tristia* 1.6 and the traditions of “exemplary” catalogue’, in S.M. Braund and R. Mayer (edd.), *Amor: Roma. Love and Latin Literature* (Cambridge, 1999), 123–42, at 130–9; R.L. Hunter, ‘The Hesiodic *Catalogue* and Hellenistic Poetry’, in R.L. Hunter (ed.), *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: Constructions and Reconstructions* (Cambridge, 2005), 239–65, at 261–4; Asquith (n. 10), 275–6, 279–86. Antimachus’ *Lyde*: Ellenberger (n. 15), 65–6; Serrao (n. 15), 93–4; Sbardella (n. 15), 86.

²⁰ The phrase may also mean that Hesiod first went up to Ascrā, on the Helicon, because of his love for the girl: A. Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists: Catalogue and Inventory Across Genres* (Cambridge, 2021), 202–3.

²¹ Hunter (n. 19), 262. See Ellenberger (n. 15), 36.

²² Note also the variations οἶα (57 and 71) and οἶω δ’ (89). See Ellenberger (n. 15), 60.

²³ For the suggestion that already in Homer οἴη and οἶα function as signposts of poetry related to the *Catalogue of Women* see, respectively, Hom. *Od.* 21.108 and 2.118, with M. Skempis and I. Ziogas, ‘Arete’s words: etymology, *ehoie*-poetry and gendered narrative in the *Odyssey*’, in J. Grethlein and A. Rengakos (edd.), *Narratology and Interpretation: The Content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature* (Berlin and New York, 2009), 213–40, at 233–4.

²⁴ Hunter (n. 19), 263. Contrast Bing (n. 18), 630.

²⁵ See, among others, Ellenberger (n. 15), 59–64.

²⁶ Hunter (n. 19), 262–3; Asquith (n. 10), 273–4. For other Hellenistic adaptations of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, in particular Phanocles’ Ἐρωτες ἢ Καλοὶ (fr. 1 P.; note ἢ ὥς in l. 1), see Hunter (n. 19),

formula on which Hermesianax's joke 'Hoīn is based is surprisingly infrequent in the *Catalogue*: it occurs about ten times in extant fragments and its exact function is unclear.²⁷ Moreover, as an alternative title for the work itself it occurs almost exclusively in Pausanias (e.g. 2.2.3, 2.16.4) and Athenaeus (8.66, 10.32), i.e. the two writers who preserve most of Hermesianax's own fragments.²⁸ Possibly it was Hermesianax himself who first came up with the idea of playing on the ἡ' οἴη formula, and his playful pun later found its way into the scholarly tradition.²⁹ In this respect, then, our poet may not have merely reflected an existing state of affairs but rather, perhaps unwittingly, he may have contributed to establishing a new way of framing the literary past, here with regard to the critical reception of the Hesiodic corpus.

The notion of literary ancestry is also crucial for the section of the fragment on elegy. Mimnermus (35–40), introduced as the inventor of 'the pentameter's soft breath' (εὔρετο ... μαλακοῦ πνεῦμ' ἀπὸ πενταμέτρου, 35–6), 'burns' for Nanno (37). Antimachus (41–6), meanwhile, in a section that is partially obscured by textual corruption, is struck by passion for 'Lydian Lyde' (Λύδης δ' ... Λυδηΐδος, 41), laments her death (43), and fills his books with tears (45–6). This narrative, marked as it is by travel and motion, finally brings Colophon to the fore: if Lydia brings Antimachus close to Lyde and Dardania is where he buries her, Colophon is the place where his sorrows finally become poetry. For all intents and purposes, this section of the fragment amounts to a laudatory portrayal of the two poets that share with Hermesianax both the composition of elegiac verses and Colophon as their hometown. Furthermore, Mimnermus, *qua* inventor of the 'pentameter', i.e. elegy, appears as the genre's founding figure—a bold, if understated, claim that should be read against the backdrop of competing claims that associated the birth of elegy with Callinus of Ephesus or Archilochus of Paros.³⁰ As we have seen earlier with Hesiod, in dealing with the elegiac poets of previous generations Hermesianax may have contributed to shaping a particular version of literary history, in this case one in which he may have had a vested interest both as an elegiac poet and as a Colophonian. Even though it remains difficult to differentiate what is 'historically' accurate from what is humorously (or conveniently)

263, and Asquith (n. 10). Nicaenetus' *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 2 P.) and Sostratus (or Sosicrates) of Phanagoreia's *Êhoioi* (SH 732) represent nothing but titles.

²⁷ Hes. *Cat.* fr. 23a.3, 26.5, 43a.2 [*coni.*], 58.7, 59.2, 181, 195.8 = [Sc.] 1, 215.1, 253 M–W; see M.L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: Its Nature, Structure, and Origins* (Oxford, 1985), 35. Cf. the different notion of the *Catalogue* and the formula ἡ' οἴη in G. Bernhardt, *Grundriss der Griechischen Literatur. II: Geschichte der Griechischen Poesie. 1: Epos, Elegie, Iamben, Melik* (Halle, 1887³), 324–5.

²⁸ See also Sostratus (or Sosicrates) of Phanagoreia's *Êhoioi* (SH 732); Hsch. s.v. ἡοῖα (η 650 L.–C.). The title is also found in the *Etymologica* and the scholia to Apollonius, Pindar and Sophocles.

²⁹ As Bing (n. 18), 630 suggests, with the declaration φημι δὲ καὶ κτλ. ('I claim that even ...', 21) 'the poet is proudly pointing up a novelty—indeed, his own invention', drawing attention to the fact that 'his claim that Hesiod came to Ascar for love of a girl called Ehoie is self-conscious fabrication'.

³⁰ See Hor. *Ars P.* 77–8 *quis tamen exiguos elegos emisit auctor, | grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est*; Didym. περὶ ποιητῶν (pp. 387–8 Schmidt) *ap.* Orion s.v. ἔλεγχος (col. 58 Sturz). On Archilochus see R.L. Hunter, 'The reputation of Callimachus', in D. Obbink and R.B. Rutherford (edd.), *Culture in Pieces: Essays on Ancient Texts in Honour of Peter Parsons* (Oxford, 2011), 220–38, at 235–6, who suggests that, in his so-called 'Seal' (SH 705 = 118 AB), Posidippus might have chosen to contrast himself with Archilochus also because the archaic poet could be considered 'as the great founding figure of his own "genre"'. More in general, Hermesianax's portrayal of Mimnermus and Antimachus evokes several features of elegy's performative tradition: see especially L. Sbardella, 'Aulodes and rhapsodes: performance and forms of Greek elegy from Mimnermus to Hermesianax', *Aitia* 8.1 (2018); L. Sbardella, 'L'"eco del pentametro": modalità di esecuzione dell'elegia greca dall'età arcaica a quella ellenistica', *QUCC* 123.3 (2019), 55–78.

distorted, it is nevertheless extremely noteworthy that Hermesianax's lines on the two elegiac poets have a crucial place in the ancient reception of their work. Not only is Hermesianax the first to credit Mimnermus with the invention of the pentameter, he is also the first author to use the word πεντάμετρον.³¹ He is also the first of only two sources connecting Antimachus' *Lyde* to the death of the poet's beloved (43–4).³²

Hermesianax is also the first and nearly the only author who indicates that Nanno and *Lyde* were Mimnermus' and Antimachus' beloved.³³ Both poems were diverse in terms of subject matter and we have little evidence about their structure.³⁴ One thing is clear: 'nowhere do we catch a whiff of Nanno herself³⁵—or *Lyde*, we might add. West supposed that the 'romantic modern picture of a Mimnermus constantly inspired by the love of a girl' was ultimately due to Antimachus, for 'Nanno arrives at Alexandria [...] hand in hand with *Lyde*, the foreign girl mourned by Antimachus'; it was his copy of Mimnermus and anything he said about him in the *Lyde* that 'exercised a decisive influence on the older poet's image and left his shorter elegies permanently under the title *Nanno*'.³⁶ But Hermesianax is the first (and almost the only) writer to mention Antimachus' supposed loss;³⁷ he is also the first who explicitly connects the two older poets in the name of love. The two girls, the two poems and their later reception may ultimately have been shaped by Hermesianax himself.

Not too Hesiodic, not really Antimachean or based on the precedent of Mimnermus—what is Hermesianax's fragment really about? The crucial characteristic of this text is its overall picture, its accumulation of stories creatively and playfully built around each one of these figures from the past. In an age of increasingly methodical scholarship, this catalogue fashions a systematized history of poetry (and, to a lesser extent, philosophy) considered *sub specie amoris*. What is significant is both the process of recreating each individual biography and the broad architecture that encompasses them. Here a few considerations are in order.

First, the character of the catalogue as a whole. Hermesianax begins, as we saw, with Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer (1–34). Their inclusion in a gallery of ancient Greek poets is hardly surprising; yet, in this respect, we find a remarkable (if seldom stressed) correspondence with the lists of ancient poets found in Hippias,

³¹ After him, the word is used by Callimachus (*Ia*. 13.31 and 45) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Comp.* 25.97). The other testimonies on the invention of the elegiac metre are very late (Marius Victorinus and Orion, *Mimn.* Test. 20–1 *Gent.*–Pr.). See Sbardella (n. 30), 75–7.

³² The other source that makes this connection is the author of the *Consolatio ad Apollonium* attributed to Plutarch (9, 106B–C = *Antim.* Test. 12 Matthews): Antimachus 'composed, as a consolation for his grief, the elegy called *Lyde*, in which he enumerated the misfortunes of the heroes, and thus made his own grief less by means of others' ills' (transl. F.C. Babbitt). Hermesianax states that Antimachus filled many books, 'ceasing from all grief' (ἐκ παντὸς παυσάμενος καμιάτου, 46), perhaps in the sense that he did so by turning his sorrows into the subject-matter of his poems (γῶον δ' ... βίβλους, 45).

³³ ἡ μεγάλη ... γυνή in Callimachus' *Aetia* 'Prologue' (fr. 1.12 Harder = *Mimn.* Test. 10 *Gent.*–Pr.) has no erotic overtone.

³⁴ *Inter alia*, the *Nanno* offered general reflections on youth and old age (fr. 5 W²) and dealt with the history of Smyrna and Colophon; the *Lyde* included narratives on the Argonauts (fr. 67–77 Matthews) and Oedipus (fr. 84).

³⁵ M.L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin and New York, 1974), 75. See also Gärtner (n. 2), 80.

³⁶ West (n. 35), 75.

³⁷ The other source is, as we saw earlier, [Plutarch]'s *Consolatio ad Apollonium*; admittedly, there is no way of establishing whether the notice in the *Consolatio* depends on Hermesianax, for its author may obviously have used other works. See also West (n. 35), 169–70 and Matthews (n. 10), 258–9 on *Antim.* fr. 93 Matthews.

Aristophanes and Plato.³⁸ The systematic nature of Hermesianax's gallery, then, is also meant to evoke (and rewrite) the kind of exemplary catalogues already popular in fifth-century reflections on, and reconstructions of, the past. If Hippias mentions Orpheus and the other poets as a foil for his own 'new and variegated discourse' (καινὸν καὶ πολυειδῆ τὸν λόγον ποιήσομαι), Hermesianax offers a fully-fledged catalogue that advertises his 'new discourse'—the erotic subject of the *Leontion* itself.

This brings us to the second point, namely, the biographical sketches. Clearly, they depend not only on the poets' texts, but also on the critical tradition that interprets, reuses and preserves the poets' images as parts of a larger cultural history. In turn, Hermesianax's narratives, as we have seen, became a relevant component of that very tradition. In composing his poem, Hermesianax may have drawn on peripatetic works such as Chamaeleon of Heraclea's *On Sappho*, and it is likely that he did so in a deliberately mocking fashion.³⁹ This is likely, especially on the level of individual biographies that make up his catalogue.

In a similar fashion, Hermesianax and his gallery of love-affairs also depend on, and react to, contemporary discourses on love as the subject of literary and especially philosophical interest.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, much about this subgenre of philosophical literature remains obscure. The one work we have significant information about is the *Ἐρωτικός* (or *Ἐρωτικά*) written by Clearchus of Soli, a pupil of Aristotle and approximately a contemporary of Hermesianax.⁴¹ His *On Love* was a mélange of general

³⁸ Hippias, 86 B 6 DK = D22 Laks–Most; Ar. *Ran.* 1030–5; Pl. *Ap.* 41a and, without Hesiod, *Ion* 536b. Apparently R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford, 1968), 52 first noted the parallel; see T.J. Nelson, 'The shadow of Aristophanes: Hellenistic poetry's reception of comic poetics', in M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit and G.C. Wakker (edd.), *Drama and Performance in Hellenistic Poetry* (Leuven, Paris, and Bristol, CT 2018), 225–71, at 237–8. As *CQ*'s anonymous referee remarks, Hesiod's omission from the *Ion* passage is hardly accidental. His didactic poetry would be a significant obstacle for the argument that poets and rhapsodes have no real knowledge of what they are singing about; in a sense, Socrates expunges Hesiod from the 'canon'.

³⁹ Bing (n. 18), 627 (and 624–7 more generally on the comparison between this fragment and extant biographical literature). Bing underscores that, in Athenaeus, Hermesianax's love triangle between Alcaeus, Sappho and Anacreon (47–56) is contrasted with a passage from the peripatetic Chamaeleon of Heraclea's *On Sappho* (Ath. *Deipn.* 13.599c = fr. 26 Wehrli): Chamaeleon wrote that, according to some people, Sappho was the addressee of Anacreon's poem on the Lesbian girl (fr. 358 Bernsdorff), and that Sappho addressed to Anacreon a different poem (Lyr. adesp. fr. 953 PMG). See also Ellenberger (n. 15), 6–9; P. Kobiliri, *A Stylistic Commentary on Hermesianax* (Amsterdam, 1998), 173; Gärtner (n. 2), 88; M. Di Marco, 'Variazioni sul "mito" di Saffo: il *divertissement* di Ermesianatte (fr. 7, 47–56 Powell)', *PhilolAnt* 6 (2013), 49–63. On the synchronism between Sappho and Anacreon see Kassel and Austin's note on fr. 71 of Diphilus. More specifically on Sappho in Athenaeus see M. de Kreijl, 'Οὐκ ἔστι Σαπφούς τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος: variants of Sappho's songs in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*', *JHS* 136 (2016), 59–72.

⁴⁰ There is ample evidence that love (ἔρως, φιλία) was the focus of lively debate in fourth-century philosophical circles. In different ways the writings of Plato, Xenophon and Aeschines of Sphettos all attest to its prominence, both in its social dimension and as philosophical principle, in Socrates' teachings and in their fourth-century reception. Love is also popular amongst Peripatetics, as Aristotle and several of his disciples (for instance Theophrastus, Heraclides Ponticus and Demetrius of Phalerum) dealt with it in specific works (*Ἐρωτικοὶ λόγοι*, *Ἐρωτικά*, *Περὶ ἔρωτος*), which in some cases might have taken the form of dialogues. See Arist. fr. 41–6 Gigon (*Ἐρωτικός*). For a list of similar works ascribed to other fourth- and third-century philosophers see O. Gigon, *Aristotelis opera*, III: *Librorum deperditorum fragmenta* (Berlin and New York, 1987), 277.

⁴¹ We have no biographical information about Clearchus; see P. Moraux, 'Cléarque de Soles, disciple d'Aristote', *LEC* 18 (1950), 22–6 (c. 370/360–290/280); F. Wehrli, *Klearchos* (Basel, 1969²), 45 (c. 340–290). Clearchus' *Ἐρωτικός*/*Ἐρωτικά* has been the subject of a recent (and

reflections, ζητήματα and various *exempla* drawn from history and poetry. He discussed, amongst other things, the erotic semiotics attached to flowers, apples (fr. 27 D(orandi)=25 W(ehrli)) and garlands (fr. 21 D.=24 W.), as Aristotle already had (fr. 41 Gigon); he cited passages from poetry, for instance the lovesick goatherd portrayed by the lyric poet Lycophronides (fr. 21 D.=844 *PMG*);⁴² he even told of a goose in love with a boy (fr. 22 D.=27 W.).⁴³ Whereas Wehrli thought that the fragments of Clearchus' *On Love* were evidence of the 'shapeless'⁴⁴ interest in love cultivated by Peripatetics, White has convincingly argued that the philosopher 'presented eros in a largely favorable light' as 'a natural human impulse, stimulated by visual beauty, driven by affection, aspiring to intimacy, and both an inspiration to poetry and a source of edification'.⁴⁵ What needs stressing, however, is that, remarkably, Clearchus' *On Love* shares with Hermesianax's catalogue a fair number of 'case studies'—a fact that to my knowledge has been overlooked by critics.

Among other things, in his *On Love* Clearchus mentioned well-known ἑταῖραι, such as Glycera (fr. 28 D.=23 W.) and Gyges' lover (fr. 23 D.=29 W.). Particularly noteworthy in this context is Aspasia. In Athenaeus Myrtilus is amazed at what Pericles did for her:⁴⁶

Περικλῆς δὲ ὁ Ὀλύμπιος, ὃς φησι Κλέαρχος ἐν πρώτῳ Ἑρωτικῶν (fr. 24 D.=30 W.), οὐχ ἔνεκεν Ἀσπασίας—οὐ τῆς νεωτέρας ἀλλὰ τῆς Σωκράτει τῷ σοφῷ συγγενομένης—καίπερ τηλικούτον ἄξιομα συνέσεως καὶ πολιτικῆς δυνάμεως κτησάμενος, οὐ συνετάραξε πᾶσαν τὴν Ἑλλάδα;

This passage is intriguing, not only because it follows closely Aspasia's portrayal in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (526–31), but also because it foregrounds that she spent time with Socrates: the verb used here, συγγίγνομαι (τῆς Σωκράτει τῷ σοφῷ συγγενομένης), can refer to either intellectual or sexual association.⁴⁷ Does Hermesianax have this passage or a similar one in mind when he depicts Socrates as madly in love with Aspasia (89–94)? In another fragment of Clearchus (fr. 25 D.=32 W.) the passion inspired by Menalcas in the lyric poetess Eryphanis is the αἴτιον for a pastoral song (νόμιον καλεῖσθαί τινά φησιν ᾠδὴν) which includes the words 'The oaks are tall, Menalcas!' (μακροὶ δρύες, ὦ Μένάλκᾳ, fr. 850 *PMG*); we know that Menalcas was treated also by Hermesianax in connection with the theme of unrequited love (fr. 8–9 L.=2–3 P.). Elsewhere in his treatise Clearchus considered the poems of Sappho and Anacreon to be no different from 'erotic songs and the so-called *Locrica*' (fr. 26 D.=33 W., *Ath. Deipn.* 14.639a).⁴⁸ According to

thoroughly convincing) reappraisal by S. White, 'Clearchus on love', in R. Mayhew and D.C. Mirhady (edd.), *Clearchus of Soli: Text, Translation, and Discussion* (London and New York, 2022), 391–434. Its fragments are nos. 19–35 in the edition of T. Dorandi (with transl. by S. White), 'Clearchus of Soli: the sources, text, and translation', *ibid.* 1–309; in Wehrli's edition they are nos. 21–35. On the work's title see White (this note), 391–4.

⁴² See also fr. 20 Dorandi (22 W.) = Lycophronides fr. 843 *PMG*.

⁴³ The episode was recounted also in Theophrastus' *On Love* (fr. 567A *FHSG*).

⁴⁴ 'ein formloses Ganzes' (Wehrli [n. 41], 54); see also Lightfoot (n. 9), 221, on the 'growing fascination' of Peripatetics such as Clearchus for love's 'more bizarre and shocking circumstances'.

⁴⁵ White (n. 41), 428.

⁴⁶ *Ath. Deipn.* 13.589d; transl. S.D. Olson.

⁴⁷ See *LSJ* s.v. II 2, 3.

⁴⁸ White (n. 41), 419 observes that, in making the celebrated pair of Sappho and Anacreon the standard for comparison, Clearchus sought 'to raise the stature of the lesser songs, not denigrate either of the recognized classics'; cf. Wehrli (n. 41), 57.

Athenaeus, *Locrica* are songs which have to do with adultery or illicit sex (μοιχικά τινες τὴν φύσιν ὑπάρχουσαι, *Deipn.* 15.697b); he cites as an example a few lines from a poem in which a woman warns her lover about the imminent return of her husband (fr. 853 *PMG*). If Clearchus read poems such as this as Sappho's or Anacreon's own words, he may have found the love triangle between Alcaeus, Sappho and Anacreon in Hermesianax (47–56) anything but implausible. Finally, Clearchus reported that two poets were struck by the barbarian ἑταῖρα Lyde, Antimachus and Lamynthius of Miletus, and that both composed poems bearing her name, one in elegiac couplets, the other in lyric meters (fr. 32 D. = 34 W.).⁴⁹ Thus, the philosopher and Hermesianax agree not only on the personal nature of the *Lyde*, but also on the status of the woman it was supposedly dedicated to; as our poet playfully writes, she was 'Lydian Lyde' (Λύδης ... Λυδηῖδος, 41).

In general, critics have long recognized that the multifaceted fascination for love current in fourth- and third-century philosophical circles may have had a lasting influence on Hellenistic poetry. According to Wehrli, for instance, Parthenius' *Sufferings in Love* attest to the impact exerted by this intellectual trend on the poetry of later centuries.⁵⁰ Our analysis demonstrates that, from a thematic point of view, there is a significant convergence already in Clearchus' *On Love* and Hermesianax's catalogue of ἐρωτικά in Book 3 of his *Leontion*. In this particular area, philosophy and poetry are thus closely interacting from the early days of the Hellenistic age. This need not imply that philosophical works were merely 'sources' for poetical treatments; they may have shared, in a broad sense, the same broad cultural milieu. But they exhibit a strikingly similar interest in the phenomenology of love, and Hermesianax has used this phenomenology as a key feature of his catalogue. Perhaps this choice had a programmatic character. In the last book of his poem, Hermesianax presents a playful picture that appropriates and refashions different critical discourses. In doing so, he juxtaposes poets and philosophers in a way that may have been significant on a metadiscursive level. If philosophers like Clearchus could mine poetry to extract examples to discuss in their works, Hermesianax's catalogue effectively demonstrates that poets could pay them back in kind and that, for all their efforts, philosophers were far from immune to the universal power of love.⁵¹

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⁴⁹ Ath. *Deipn.* 13.597a; Antim. Test. 10 Matthews; Lamynthius, fr. 839 *PMG*. According to Matthews (n. 10), 27, 'the relative chronological closeness of Clearchus [...] to Antimachus is some guarantee of the accuracy of his information that Lyde was in fact a *hetaira*'. It is in this context that Athenaeus mentions Nanno as the pipe-girl (αὐλητρίς) who inspired Mimnermus and Leontion as Hermesianax's beloved.

⁵⁰ Wehrli (n. 41), 54; on Parthenius see now Lightfoot (n. 9), 17–96.

⁵¹ See also J. Latacz, 'Das Plappermäulchen aus dem Katalog', in C. Schäublin (ed.), *Catalepton. Festschrift für Bernhard Wyss zum 80. Geburtstag* (Basel, 1985), 77–95, at 78.