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LOAN WORDS, FABLES AND PROPHETIC WRITINGS. ORIENTAL MIMESIS IN THE ALEXANDRA OF LYCOPHRON

After a hundred years of studies which have brought among works still as indispensable as Scheer's edition of the *Alexandra* with the scholia and other important contributions by B. Niebuhr, J. Konze, L. Hensel, U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, C. von Holzinger, K. Ziegler, and more recently by S. West, V. Gigante-Lanzara and G. Shade, one has the feeling that we are standing on the quite firm ground established by Lycophronic scholarship, and that we all share this feeling despite the residual ambiguities, doubts, and lack of a considerable part of the relevant literary, mythological, historical, linguistic and geographical material.¹ Two *RE* papers by Josifovič and Ziegler focus on the Western Mediterranean, and naturally for a good reason, because it is the West, Italy, Sicily and the Balkan region, their geography, mythology and

¹ This paper owes much to the encouragement, bibliographical information and printed materials sent to me by Stephanie West, Hertford College, Oxford; B. G. Niebuhr, Über das Zeitalter Lykophrons des Dunkels, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* (= *RhM*) 1827 (1), pp. 108-117 (= *Kleine historische und philologische Schriften*, 1828 (1), pp. 438-450; E. Sheer, *Lycophronis Alexandra*, vol. 1-2, Berlin, 1881-1908; C. von Holzinger, *Lykophron, Alexandra*, Leipzig, 1895; V. Gigante-Lanzara, *Licofrone, Alessandra*, Milano 2000; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *De Lycophronis Alexandra commentatiuncula*, Greifswald, 1883 (= *Kleine Schriften* 2, 12-29); L. Hensel, *Weissagungen in der alexandrinischen Poesie*, Giessen, 1908; J. Konze, *De dictione Lycophronis*, Monasterii 1870; S. Sudhaus, Die Abfassungszeit der *Alexandra*, *RhM* 63, 1908, pp. 481-487; J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, III 2, Strassbourg 1893-1904, pp. 478 ff.; S. West, *Lycophron Italicized*, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (= *JHS*) 104, 1984, pp. 127-151; V. Gigante-Lanzara, Le vie del mare. Eroi e città nei vaticini di Cassandra, in *La Parola del Passato* 328, 2003, pp. 12-60; G. Shade, *Lycophrons 'Odyssey': Alexandra 648-819*, Berlin, New York 1999; a review of the book, V. Gigante-Lanzara, *La Parola del Passato*, 319, 2001, pp. 308-312.

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religion, which prevail and seem to be central for the interpretation of this poem.² This notion also refers to the three most valuable contributions in recent decades: S. West's 'Lycophron italicised?', V. Gigante-Lanzara's 'Le vie del mare' and G. Shade's *Lycophrons 'Odyssee'*.³ On my part I would like to turn again to the East, and more precisely to the Oriental vocabulary and Eastern prophetic writings.

Ziegler observed the wide range of tools employed by the poet to condense and darken the meaning of his exposition.⁴ The application of foreign words became one of the components of his technique. Oriental words appear among actually much more voluminous lexical layers of Richard's *poetica, rariora et audaciora*.⁵ All of them seem to have been meticulously and laboriously collected from the tragic lexical lore, and above all from Aeschylus, the Cyclic epics, Archaic lyrics, Alexandrian poets like Callimachus and Euphorion, with detectable assistance of Alexandrian lexis in the background.⁶ The Oriental words interwoven into the linguistic structure add yet another refinement to Lycophron's sophisticated poetics. Ziegler emphasizes the poem's 'well-thought-out' structure.⁷ His analysis of the *Alexandra*'s structural components brings to mind Schmiel's brilliant analysis of structural symmetry and interdependences in Moschus' *Europa*.⁸ The principle of formal perfectionism also looms in the background of the *latebrae atri Lycophronis* (Stat. *Silv.* 5, 3, 156), that is his Esopic and 'consciously deceiving language'.⁹ This idiosyncratic language resulted from Lycophron's strongly mannerist aesthetics derived from the Callimachean *Aetia* and further developed in Euphorion's *Chiliades*. It achieved its full maturity

² K. Ziegler, *RE* XIII, 1927, s.v. Lycophron (8), 2316-82; S. Josifovič, *RESuppl.* XI, 1968, s.v. Lycophron, 888-930.

³ see above n. 1.

⁴ Ziegler 1927, 2343 ff.

⁵ *ibid.* 2346.

⁶ Ziegler 1927, 2346 on the role of the Alexandrian lexis as a proof for the late date of the poem.

⁷ 'Ein besonders künstliches Beispiel hellenistischer Umrahmungstechnik', Ziegler 1927, 2332; S. West, Lycophron's *Alexandra*: 'Hindsight as Foresight Makes No Sense?' in: M. Depew, D. Obbink, eds. *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons and Society*, Cambridge, Mass., 2000, pp. 153-166, here: p. 155.

⁸ R. Schmiel, Moschus' *Europa*, *Classical Philology* 76, 1981, pp. 261-272.

⁹ Ziegler 1927, 2344.

in the *Alexandra*.¹⁰ The *Alexandra* is a mythological poem written in iambic verse, an epyllion dressed in the tragic gown of the traditional envoy's speech, in other words an intriguing and disturbing mixture of genres, which calls to mind Meleager's epigram which blended the phraseology of the epithalamion with the language and metaphor of the epitaph (*AP* 7, 182), or Theocritus' 7th *Idyll*, which comprised lyrical paraclausithyron and propempticon, both set within the frames of bucolic drama engaging shepherds in a music contest. The picture is only too familiar for the enthusiasts of the Hellenistic poetry.¹¹ The *Alexandra*'s complicated web of literary references, the regularity of its compositional structures, expert and masterly play on mythological material, its language woven out of rare, bizarre and enigmatic words and phrases, meticulously collected and harmonized within the poem's unified structure, calls to mind a carefully polished jewel of great beauty, a precious stone with hundreds of faces. Each of those faces and all of them together endow it with enchanting glamour. The *Alexandra* is a work of the mature Alexandrianism, perfected by an ingenious poet who successfully blended philological erudition with poetic talent. Lycophron's poem is remarkable for the author's zeal to work out a perfect form, which reminds us of H. Hesse's glass bead game. Lycophron takes us for a long Odyssey into the world of mythology, however at the same time for an Odyssey into the realm of language, populated with its seductive and dangerous witches, its monsters, miracles and mysteries. The poet's Oriental vocabulary makes up only one tiny face on the jewel's surface. Its glamour fades in the splendour of the whole precious stone. Konze included a selection of the loan words of Oriental descent in his rather ambitious project aimed to describe the entire range of Lycophron's vocabulary. C. von Holzinger in his reference to Konze's study merely pointed to a couple of Egyptian words.¹² Likewise Ziegler.¹³ T. Sinko noticed the presence of a couple of 'barbarisms'.¹⁴ In his comment on the language of Aeschylus' *Supplices* Konze aptly remarked that *Chorum enim virginum Danaidum talia (i.e. obsoleta et peregrina vocabula) loquentem poeta facit, quibus*

¹⁰ Ziegler 1927, 2378 on the literary development from the *Aetia* to the *Chiliades* and successively to the *Alexandra*; *ibid.* 2376 on the chronological priority of Euphorion's *Chiliades*.

¹¹ W. Kroll, *Die Kreuzung der Gattungen. Studien zur Verständnis der römischen Literatur*, Stuttgart, 1924; S. West's 'generic hybrid', The *Alexandra*'s Fluctuating Fortunes, *Terminus* 1-2, 2001, pp. 127-140, here: p. 138; S. West 2000, p. 159; Ziegler's 'Periode notorischer Stil Mischung', Ziegler 1927, 2333 or 'ein typisch alexandrinisches Mischgebilde aus verschiedensten Gattungen', *ibid.* 2334.

¹² von Holzinger 1895, pp. 20f.

¹³ Ziegler 1927, 2347.

¹⁴ T. Sinko, *Literatura grecka*, 2, cz. 1, Kraków, 1947, p. 527.

*prodat, non solum cultu et habitu, sed etiam lingua earum originem non esse Graecam.*¹⁵ Lycophron followed in his footsteps. It has been recognized for a long time that in the creation of his idiosyncratic, mannerist and highly enigmatic language, this *auf höchste gesteigerte Änigmatische des Ausdrucks*, as Ziegler observes¹⁶, Lycophron based his style above all on the Aeschylean dramas.

Some reservations must be expressed before I review the *Alexandra*'s loan words of Hamitic and Semitic descent. Some of them meet both the phonetic and semantic criteria of borrowing, while others raise legitimate doubts. A. McGready aptly wrote in his paper 'Egyptian Words in the Greek Vocabulary' that 'differences in phonetic structure between Greek and ancient Egyptian, the inadequacy of the Greek alphabet as a medium for representing accurately the full range of sounds occurring in Hamitic and Semitic tongues, the insensitivity of the Greek ear to certain aspirates, gutturals and sibilants common to these languages, have all combined to blur the transliteration.'¹⁷ We are going to traverse moving sands, where it is always easy to make a false step inadvertently and find oneself in the world of fiction to which comparative linguistics is prone. The more so as Greek borrowings from Egyptian were occasional and limited to a few selected semantic classes of nouns, which comprised, for example, some exotic animal and botanical species, a few products of Egyptian origin, some weights

¹⁵ J. Konze, *De dictione Lycophronis*, Monasterii, 1870, p. 56, on the appearance and characteristics of the Danaids in Aeschylus' *Supplices*, see I. Brooke, *Costume in Greek Classic Drama*, London, 1962; H. Bacon, *Barbarians in Greek Tragedy*, New Haven, 1961, on Aeschylus: pp. 15-63.

¹⁶ Ziegler 1927, 2334.

¹⁷ A.G. McGready, Egyptian Words in the Greek Vocabulary, *Glotta* 46, 1968, pp. 247-254, here: p. 248; further bibliography: B. Hemmerdinger, Noms communs grecs d'origine égyptienne, *Glotta* 46, 1968, pp. 238-247; R.H. Pierce, Egyptian Loan-Words in Ancient Greek, *Symbolae Osloenses* 46, 1971, pp. 96-107; A. Wiedemann, *Sammlung altägyptischer Wörter welche von klassischen Autoren umschrieben und übersetzt worden sind*, Leipzig 1883; A. Erman, Ägyptische Lehnwörter im Griechischen, (*Bezzensbergers*) *Beiträge zur Kunde der indogermanischen Sprachen*, 7, 1883, pp. 336-338; W. Spiegelberg, Ägyptische Lehnwörter in der älteren griechischen Sprache, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 41, 1907, pp. 127-132; A. Erman, H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, vols. 1-5, Berlin 1955; W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, Oxford 1939; W. Westendorf, *Koptisches Handwörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1965/1977; W. Muss-Arnolt, On Semitic Words in Greek and Latin, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 23, 1892, pp. 35-156; E. Masson, *Recherches sous les plus anciens emprunts sémitiques en grec*, Paris 1967; H. Rosén, *L'hébreu et ses rapports avec le monde classique. Essai d'évaluation culturelle*, Paris 1979; W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, Leipzig, 1910; C. Brockelmann, *Lexikon Syriacum*, Halle, 1928.

and measures, and a number of terms relating to the specifically Egyptian religious and cultural milieu, which had no counterparts in the Greek culture.¹⁸ The alien African language and culture and also its undecipherable scripture reduced the process of borrowing into Greek to a limited number of nouns. Although the task is difficult, it is worth approaching from the limited perspective of the Lycophronic studies, because the *Alexandra* contains a small but intriguing, tiny collection of Egyptian words:

βάρην (ή βάρης), an Egyptian raft, or 'a flat-bottomed boat',¹⁹ of the raft of Odysseus (*Al.* 745), a word with a well-established literary tradition (Aesch. *Supp.* 836, 873, 882; *Pers.* 553, 1075; *Hdt.* 2, 41; 60, 90), derived from βαίρε (Sahidic), βαίρι (Bohairic). This word meets the criterion of assimilation to the Greek system of inflections.²⁰ Judging by its context it was a regularly applied element of Orientalist stylization.²¹

κάρβανον (*Al.* 605), καρβάνων (*Al.* 1387), in Aeschylus' *Supp.* καρβάν, κάρβανος for βάρβαρος (*Supp.* 118, 130, 914). Basing on Hesychius, Konze explains that the Greeks used the word as a label for 'barbarians', while the barbarians themselves used it of the Carians.²² The word's etymology still remains unclear (Frisk s.v.). Kretschmer derived it from the Egyptian place name Qarbana (Herakleion).²³

φώσσων (ό) is yet another foreign word in Lycophron's miniature lexicon: φώσσωνας (*Al.* 26), of a ship's sail. 'A coarse linen garment' is its original meaning (*LSJ*). It also appears in a compound: εἰναφώσσων, of a ship rigged with nine sails (*Al.* 101). I assume it can be derived from Egyptian ʕwṯe, sweat, which by analogy can be referred to σουδάριον, *sudarium*, *sudor*.²⁴

¹⁸ McGready 1968, p. 252.

¹⁹ McGready 1968, p. 249.

²⁰ Pierce 1971, p. 98.

²¹ E. Boisacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Heidelberg, 1950; Frisk (= H. Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1 (1960), 2 (1961), 3 (1972), Heidelberg, s.v. from Coptic *bari*; Konze, 1870, p. 56, in Aesch. *Supp.* 874; Bacon 1961, p. 20; H. Broadhead, ed. *The Persae of Aeschylus*, Cambridge, 1960, s.v.

²² Konze 1870, p. 60.

²³ *Glotta* 31, p. 250; an alternative etymology offered by Hommel, *Philologus* 98, 132 ff. from New Testament Aramaic κορβάν, offering (Frisk s.v.), Hebrew קרבן (*korban*), offering, present, sacrificial gift.

²⁴ unaccounted for in Frisk; *LSJ*: perhaps Egyptian; Konze 1870, p. 56 following Pollux, *Onom.* VII, 71: χιτών Αἰγύπτιος, *ibid.* εἰναφώσσωνα στόλον classem novem velis

κάσσα (ή) (AL 131) – whore, strumpet, lewd woman, of Helen, a strongly derogative word; a shortened form of κασαλβάς, also related to κασωρίς, κασωρεύω, the latter also attested in the *Alexandra* (AL 772, of Penelope!). ‘Der Bildung nach ganz dunkel’ added Frisk (s.v.). I only tentatively guess that it may descend from Egyptian *καφακελ* (kashavel), earring (Sahidic, Akhmimic) (Westendorf s.v.). Probably according to a principle of *pars pro toto*. I am suggesting this derivation having in mind Erman’s and Pierce’s judicial caution as regards the majority of ‘well over two hundred Greek words for which an Egyptian origin has been claimed.’²⁵

However, ἔρπιν (AL 579) and πέρ α (AL 1428) are the words which have occupied the attention of the Lycophronic scholars and are regarded as representative for the Lycophronic *onomasticulum* of foreign words.²⁶ ἔρπις (ό) appears in AL in the well chosen context of the *Oinotropoi*, that is in the Dionysiac context, and the Delian river of Inopos which flooded at the same time as the Nile (the Nile is called Triton in AL 576; similarly AL 119). Joannes Tzetzes correctly understood it as an Egyptian word for ‘wine’ and noted its occurrence in Hipponax: ἔρπιν ὁ σκότος καπηλεύει (Schol. 579, Scheer) (Hippon. 51, Bergk), ‘the night sells the wine in large quantities’.²⁷ Frisk recalled the demotic *irp* (s.v.). Coptic *hrp*, wine, attested in all the Egyptian dialects (Sahidic, Akhmimic, Fayumic, Bohairic), with secondary forms *erp* (Akh.) or *p̄p* (Sah.), can be recommended as a better analogy (Westendorf s.v.). The question is whether Lycophron read it in the same way as the Scholiast, namely as ἔρπις δε παρὰ τὸ ἔρποντας ποιεῖν τοὺς πίνοντας ἀμέτρως (Schol. 579, Scheer), etymologized from ‘those who creep (ἔρπω) as a result of excessive drinking’, (which is by the way a fine instance of popular etymologizing),²⁸ or perhaps selected the word because it sounded

exstructam; M.G. Ciani, *Lexikon zu Lykophron*, Hildesheim 1975, p. 332, pl. carbasa, vela (without Egyptian reference).

²⁵ Erman 1883; Pierce 1968, p. 99: ‘most of the alleged Egyptian etymologies are virtually without foundation and /.../ in very few instances is the evidence that can be adduced sufficient to demonstrate the purported derivation.’

²⁶ Ziegler, 1927, 2347; von Holzinger pp. 20 f.; Sinko, 1947, p. 527; McGready 1968, p. 249; Ciani 1975, πέρρα (semel dictum), verbum Aegyptium = ἥλιος, p. 245; ἔρπις (v. Aegyptium), vinum, p. 106.

²⁷ Similarly Eustathius the Thessalian in his commentary on the *Iliad*, ad 10, 359, p. 1633, 2, following Konze, 1870, p. 56; Konze, 1870, p. 56 refers to the *falsa lectio* of ὄλπιν (flask), followed by Sinko, 1947, p. 527.

²⁸ We know numerous instances of such etymologizing in the Greek letters, e.g. Anatolian Pessinus ἐκ τοῦ πεσόντος ἀγάλματος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ (from the idol fallen from heaven) in Herodian 1, 11, 1; Egyptian Coptos from κόπτειν to strike himself in the act of

familiar to him, both because of his Egyptian experience and his thorough knowledge of the poetic lore. An answer which is not easy might throw more light on the controversial question of the *Alexandra*’s authorship. The prevailing opinion says that Lycophron belonged to the circle of Titus Quinctius Flamininus, and was not identical with the Alexandrian playwright, and consequently was not an Alexandrian at all.

πέρραν (AL 1428) is an Egyptian word, the Greek literary descent of which has not been confirmed so far. In other words it may be a borrowing from Egyptian. Tzetzes explained πέρρα (ή) as an Egyptian word for ἥλιος, the sun (Schol. 1427, Scheer). His reading was acknowledged by the 19th-century Orientalist Seyffarth, who derived it *ex lingua coptica*.²⁹ However there is an alternative tradition in the *Scholia*, which read πέρραν as τὴν γῆν that is ‘land.’ (Schol. 1428, Scheer). This tradition has also found its followers. Konze made efforts to vindicate πέρραν for the Greek vocabulary in his valuable study on the Lycophronic lexicon.³⁰ Let us quote the verse concerned: σκία καλύψει πέρ αν, ἀμβλύνων σέλας, the shadow will cover the sun and make the light dim. The poet had in mind the arrows which were going to be shot by the Persian archers of Xerxes, so again the word appeared in a well-selected Oriental context. I think there is no doubt about the Egyptian origin of this word, which we can safely derive from *ph* in all the Egyptian dialects, also *pei*, *pi* (Akh.) and *pe* (Fay., Akh.; Westendorf s.v.). A borrowing from Egyptian seems even more likely, because the word entered the Greek together with its article, *phn*. Its literary context may also be helpful. The situation apparently alludes to one of the most popular anecdotes in Herodotus, one of Lycophron’s authorities. Lycophron recalled a proud answer made by Dieneke the Spartan: when the Persian arrows make the sun dim, we will be fighting against the Medes in the shadow, and not in the sun, εἰ ἀποκρυπτόντων τῶν Μήδων τὸν ἥλιον ὑπὸ σκιῇ ἔσοιτο πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἡ μάχη καὶ οὐκ ἐν ἡλίῳ (Hdt. 7,226). This example also illustrates well one of the intriguing points in Lycophron’s poetic art. We sometimes observe that despite all his darkness of meaning, he happens to be at times astonishingly easy and straightforward. Referring to the death of Agapenor’s father in the Calydonian hunt, he drew on a colloquial phrase ‘between the chalice and the lips’: ὥς πολλὰ χεῖλενς καὶ δεπαστραίων ποτῶν / μέσῳ κυλίνδει μοῖρα παμμήστωρ βροτῶν (AL 489-490). S. West has recently recalled Bethe’s apt remark: Es setzt

ritual mourning in Plu. *de Iside* 14, Egyptian *khrt*, *khrtw*, *khrtt* (Sah.); Egyptian Busiris from βοῦς, the shape of the coffin, in Diodorus 1, 85, 5, Egyptian *phgcr* (Sah.), *phgcr* (Boh.), the House of Osiris etc.

²⁹ Konze 1870, p. 56.

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 56f. followed by Sinko 1947, p. 527.

die Lösung viel Gelehrsamkeit voraus, doch ist sie (*Alexandra*) nicht ganz so schwer wie es scheint.³¹

There are also proper names of African descent which add their alien tones to the exotic flavour of selected verses and passages: Τεύχειρα, a town in Cyrene (*Schol.* 877, *Schol.* Scheer); Ἀυσίγδα, a Libyan town on the River Κίνυψ (*Schol.* 885, Kinkel) or Κίννυφος (Κινύφειος ὅος) (*Schol.* 881, Scheer); Syrta and Asbystian (i.e. Libyan) plains (*Al.* 648), the Asbystians, the African tribe (*Al.* 895);³² the word also resounds in the waves of the Asbystas, i.e. the Nile (*Al.* 848); the Eremboi tribe, which appears beside the Ethiopians and Sidonians already in Homer's *Odyssey* (4, 84).³³ The word Libya itself returns in a number of verses, as for example in the Libyans (*Al.* 894), in the description of the African wind of the East Mediterranean (*Al.* 1016), and the Libyan sand (Λίβυσσαν ψάμμον) (*Al.* 1014). We also find Memphites for Osiris, king of Egypt (*Al.* 1294).

African and above all the Egyptian words occur more frequently in the poem than Phoenician Semitic words, which however have also left their impact on the linguistic texture of the Lycophronic verse. Thus we encounter σαλαμβάς in δισσὰς σαλαμβάς, two Salambai (*Al.* 98), which refer to the rocky straits in the neighbourhood of Gytheion. The Scholiast understood the word as φανόπη, an opening for light (*Schol.* 98, Scheer). This meaning was followed by Frisk (s.v.), who derived it from Syrian *šelpā* (𐤍𐤔𐤐𐤓 *rima portae*, Brockelmann s.v.³⁴) and *šelaf* (𐤍𐤔𐤐𐤓 Brockelmann, s.v.). In this context Frisk aptly adduced Σαλαμβώ, Aphrodite of the Babylonians, and Σαλαμβάς, a lament for Adonis.

κάλχη (*Al.* 864) appears in the description of elegant female garments trimmed with κάλχη (purple) (*Schol.* 864, Scheer). Frisk remarked that the word's etymology was unknown, *LSJ* that it was probably a loan-word. I think we can probably derive it from the North-West Semitic stock, e.g. 𐤏𐤋𐤍𐤕 (kalunitho), *anemone*. The Greek ἀνεμώνη ἀγρία is a scarlet wind-flower (*LSJ*). Lycophron's

³¹ E. Bethe, *Die griechische Dichtung*, Wildpark-Potsdam, 1924, p. 336; following West's, *The Alexandra's Fluctuating Fortunes*, *Terminus* 1-2, 2001, pp. 127-140, here: p. 140; cf. Ziegler 1927, 2341.

³² in Cyrenaica (*Hdt.* 4, 170); also known from Callimachus (ἡ Ἀσβυστις γαῖα); Kinyps in *Hdt.* 4, 175; 5, 42.

³³ They appear as African troglodytes in Strabo 16, 748. The Scholiast read the name as descending from 'those who dwell in the underground caves (ἐν τῇ ἔρᾳ ἡγουν τῇ γῇ) and go under the ground surface' (βαίνουσιν), one more instance of the Greek 'orientalist' etymologizing (*Schol.* 827, Scheer).

³⁴ C. Brockelmann, *Lexikon Syriacum*, Halle, 1928.

Semitic *onomasticum* is enriched with proper names, such as Μύρρα (*Al.* 829), a name redolent of Eastern fragrances, of the daughter of Theias, king of Byblos.³⁵ We also find a Saraptian woman, a metaphoric Europa (*Al.* 1300), the inhabitant of Sarepta (Sarapta), and Karne, a town in Phoenicia (*Schol.* 1291, Scheer). In his choice of Iranian and Anatolian words Lycophron drew mostly on the Aeschylean lore: μίτρα, which appeared in a compound of χαλκομίτρου εὐμαρίδας, of a helmeted Amazon (*Al.* 997), a word of Indo-Iranian origin, but long since domesticated by the Greek idiom.³⁶ (ἡ εὐμαρίς) (*Al.* 855), Persian shoes made of deer-skin, in attributive usage in Lycophron: ἀσκέρας εὐμαρίδας, already attested in Aeschylus' *Persae* 660, and Eur. *Or.* 1370. ἀσκέρα (*Al.* 855, 1322), a winter shoe with fur lining, is probably, of Lydian descent (Frisk s.v.) (Hipp. 19).³⁷ πάλμυς (*Al.* 691), king, of Zeus, derived from Lydian *almluś* (Frisk s.v.), present already in Hipponax 1,15 and Aeschylus (fr. 437).³⁸

It is not surprising that many of these words were employed to trim the Oriental stories like the *nostos* of Menelaus (*Al.* 820-851), the story of Guneus and his companions in Libya (*Al.* 877-908), the five heroes in Cyprus (*Al.* 447-591), or the stories of Io, Europa, Medea and the Amazons (*Al.* 1291-1340). There is, however, one place where Lycophron made efforts to weave into its idiom some exotic sounding Oriental words and contexts (*Al.* 854-855):

Ταμάσσιον κρατήρα καὶ βοάγριον
καὶ τὰς δάμαρτος ἀσκέρας εὐμαρίδας

These verses refer to Menelaus, who came to Sicily where he made offerings to Athena. They comprised a chalice from Tamassos, wrought in bronze,

³⁵ balsamic wood in Sappho, Aram. *mura*, Hebr. *mor*, Lat. *murra*, *murrina* (Frisk s.v.).

³⁶ Konze 1870, 63; the Scholiast attests to borrowings from Aesch. and Hippon. (*Schol.* 855, Scheer).

³⁷ Kretschmer, *Glotta* 27, 37.

³⁸ Cf. σιγύμω (*Al.* 556), σίγυμνον, spear, Cyprian (*Hdt.* 5, 9; Arist. *Pol.* 1457 b 6), Scythian (*Schol.A.R.* 4, 320), from the Sigynnae, a tribe on the Danube River; πτέλας, a boar, Cilician (?) (*Schol.* 833, Kinkel = G. Kinkel, *Lycophronis Alexandra*, Leipzig, 1880); Oriental proper names: Γαύας, Cyprian name for Adonis (*Schol.* 831, Scheer), with another nice etymology offered by the Scholiast: namely from the dead corpse, which turns dry in the earth (παρὰ τὸ τῇ αὖεσθαι) (*Schol.* 831, Scheer), Themiskyra (*Al.* 1330), the dwelling of the Amazons in Paphlagonia (*Schol.* 1330), also Μάγαρσος (*Al.* 444), or Kytaea in Colchis (*Al.* 1312). Notice the occurrence of the intriguing νάνος (*Al.* 1244), in Etruscan a wanderer (?) (*Schol.* 1244, Kinkel), and πόλαις (nom. πόλαι), allegedly πόλις in Colchian (*Schol.* 1021 sq., Kinkel).

Menelaus' shield, and his wife's soft, elegant shoes.³⁹ Just two iambic verses contain two foreign words of Oriental descent, besides an archaic word for wife δάμωρ, and a Cyprian chalice, which was proverbial for its art and quality. In his effort to create a passage conspicuous for its Orientalist style Lycophron drew on parallel Aeschylean models, as for example the Orientalizing stanza from the Persian lament over the warriors fallen in the Battle of Salamis (*Pers.* 657-663). The stanza was constructed of words of Lydian and Iranian descent, as well as of archaisms and terms for objects immediately associated by the Greek audience to the Eastern cultural context. In this connection the reasons for Lycophron's fascination with the Aeschylean idiom became even clearer. Like Aeschylus, Lycophron composed his language of breakneck compounds, of word forms collected from Ionic, Doric and Aeolic – a truly odd dialectical mixture,⁴⁰ and finally of foreign words, mostly of Oriental descent, in his concerted effort to condense and darken the poem's idiom, but also in an effort to strengthen the Oriental *mimesis* in his Eastern stories. Aeschylus' *Persae*, *Prometheus Vinculus* and *Supplices* offered an abundance of successful models for such a style. In addition, like Herodotus Aeschylus pictured a captivating historical panorama of East-West conflicts.

To conclude this part of my paper I would also like to point out the vast geographical span covered by his loan-words. Their dispersion marks out with Lycophron's mythical geography. His truly Alexandrian search for rare, alien and unusual words is paralleled by a similar technique on the poem's narrative level. On the one hand Lycophron collected and presented a handful of standard Greek Oriental myths, on the other hand he introduced some rare or unknown stories from the Oriental lore. Hensel expressed this in the following way: 'the learned Lycophron boasts of the myths, which he discovered and wrote down as a result of his extensive studies. He was the first to introduce these myths to the Greek letters.'⁴¹ The majority of them were placed within the frames of two larger compositional structures of the poem: the wanderings of Menelaus, namely their Eastern chapter (*Al.* 820-851), and the part styled on the Herodotean *prooemium* inspired by the eternal conflict between Europe and Asia (*Al.* 1291-1340). In both cases we observe a display of standard Greek-Oriental myths situated within the horizon of the traditional literary Hellenic Orient. It is by far not the Orient explored by the historians of Alexander the Great, which stretched to Iran, Central Asia and India, once pictured so impressively by L. Pearson.⁴² This is

³⁹ Cf. a discussion on the proper spelling of Tamassos, Tamasa, Temesa in Cyprus (*Schol.* 854-855, Scheer; *Schol.* 854, Kinkel).

⁴⁰ Konze 1870, pp. 58-59; Ziegler 1927, 2354.

⁴¹ L. Hensel, *Weissagungen in der alexandrinischen Poesie*, Giessen, 1908, p. 49.

⁴² L. Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*, London, 1960.

the image of the East contained within the exclusivist Greek poetic tradition inherited from Homer and the Cyclic epics, the tradition cherished and treasured by generations of Greek poets like a precious jewel.

Thus we learn about Menelaus and his adventurous sail across the Arab Sea, and also of his visit to Byblos, the town of Myrra with its famous sanctuary of Adonis (*Al.* 828-833).⁴³ We also hear of Menelaus' sojourn in the palaces of Kepheus in Ethiopia, where he saw the spring of Hermes, Io's divine saviour (*Al.* 835), and the Rocks of Andromeda (*Al.* 836). At this point Lycophron resorted to his beloved Chinese-box trick and in a relatively long digression told the story of the rescue of Andromeda (*Al.* 836-846). After a sail along the River Nile Menelaus arrives at the Island of Proteus and his seals. Thus we have Myrrha and Kinyras, Adonis and Aphrodite, Io and Hermes, Perseus and Andromeda, and finally Proteus, a handful of representative Greek-Oriental myths. A similar picture emerges from the second set of the Oriental tall stories. A chain of compact narratives comprises successively the rape of Io, Europa, Medea and Antiope, yet another collection of choice Hellenic love stories set in Oriental scenery. Sophocles and Euripides made Andromeda a celebrity of the Greek tragic drama; Moschus devoted to Europa and Io his epyllion symptomatic for his perfectionist Alexandrian form; Adonis' boar hunt and the lament of Aphrodite became the subject of Argea's enchanting song in Theocritus' mime (*Id.* 15); Bion celebrated Adonis in his epitaph, an ingenious creation of the Greek Orientalizing style in poetry; while Medea, as if her never ending success story in the tragic drama were not enough, became a heroine in the work of the greatest Alexandrian epic poet, Apollonius Rhodius. Theseus and Antiope always played a central role in the imagery of the Athenian classical art as a mythological prefiguration of the Persian wars. It is clear, then, that Lycophron located his Oriental stories within the frames of the cherished Hellenic literary tradition. However Lycophron would not have been himself if he had not enriched his narrative with unknown stories, new details and rare alternative versions, the fruit of his antiquarian zeal for literary novelties. Thus we can read the moralizing story of Guneus the Arab, a wise and just servant of Queen Semiramis; or of the wizard king Proteus, who crossed under the sea from Thrace to Egypt (*Al.* 115-131). The motif of the Egyptian magic and the story of the sons of Proteus who used to kill foreigners reflect stereotype views held by the Greeks, their fascination and fear of the Orient. In this way the poet presented his readers with one more version of the Heracles-Busiris and Heracles-Antaeus myths.

⁴³ Cf. B. Soyeux, *Byblos et la fête des Adonies*, Leiden, 1977; W. Atallah, *Adonis dans la littérature et l'art grecs*, 1966; C. Vellay, *Le culte et les fêtes d'Adonis-Thammuz dans l'Orient antique*, 1904.

S. West drew attention to Lycophronic version of Io's sojourn in Egypt.⁴⁴ In Lycophron's story Io married Memphites, identified by the Scholiast with Osiris (*Schol.* 1294, Scheer). We learn from the poet that it was a fatal marriage for the king. If the Scholiast's reading is correct, Lycophron seems to have blended the story of Io with the sacred Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis, which we know only from its Hellenized version documented by Plutarch in *de Iside* (12-20).⁴⁵ West recalls Callimachus' identification of Io with Isis (*Epigr.* 5, 7, 1).⁴⁶ This is an intriguing point in the *Alexandra*, which brings one more argument against a traditional chronology for the poem, dated by some to the period of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. After her escape to Egypt Arsinoe II was celebrated and venerated as the second Io. Thanks to B. Freyer-Schauenburg's paper 'Io in Alexandria' we have something like an archaeology of Arsinoe II as a ταυροπάρθενος κόρη (half-cow, half-girl), which consists of a tiny gallery of sculpted busts of Arsinoe portrayed with horns.⁴⁷ The panegyric if not servilistic tones which reflect the religious cult of the Queen are commonplace in the Alexandrian poetry. We know them well from Theocritus' *Idylls* 15 (*Adoniazusae*) or 17 (*Enkomion*), both dated c. 270 BC, and also from Callimachus' *Coma Berenices* (246-5 BC) known to us in the translation by Catullus (*Cat.* 66, 52-58). Moschus gave the story a special prominence in his poem *Europa* (vv. 37-62).⁴⁸ In Lycophron's *Alexandra* the story of Io is contained within the frame of 4 verses, where Io appears as a fatal wife, who is going to bring misfortune to her husband and plague to both Europe and Asia (*Al.* 1291-1294). Besides, Io is only mentioned as eponymous for the Iones (*Al.* 631) and only alluded to in the *aition* of Hermes' water spring in Ethiopia, where Io was saved by the messenger god (*Al.* 835). It seems unlikely that a poet from the Pleiad courtier poets' circle had not referred to Ptolemy Philadelphos and Arsinoe II venerated as the goddess Isis-Io in the seventies of the 3rd century BC, and even not in the places and contexts where it should be naturally expected. The *Alexandra* is symptomatic for its lack of panegyric tones, except for the eulogy of the Aeneads (*Al.* 1226-1280), long suspected to be a later interpolation.⁴⁹ West expressed the opinion that as many as roughly 200 verses

⁴⁴ S. West, Lycophron on Isis, *JEA* 70, 1984, pp. 151-154.

⁴⁵ T. Hopfner, *Plutarch über Isis und Osiris*, I-II, Prague 1940-41, repr. 1974; J.G. Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, ed., intr., comment., University of Wales, 1970; C. Froidefond, ed. *Plutarque. Oeuvres morales*, V. 2. *Isis et Osiris*, Paris, 1988.

⁴⁶ West 1984, p. 152.

⁴⁷ B. Freyer-Schauenburg, Io in Alexandria, *MDAIR* 90, 1983, pp. 35-49.

⁴⁸ Schmiel 1981; M. Campbell, ed. *Moschus. Europa*, Hildesheim 1991; W. Bühler, *Die Europa des Moschus*, text, trans., comm., Hermes Einzelschriften 13, 1960.

⁴⁹ See e.g. West 1984.

in the *Alexandra* might have been interpolated.⁵⁰ However this theory does not refer to Io's story which is well harmonized within the poem's larger section modeled on Herodotus' *prooemium*, where Io takes the same place as in the *Alexandra*. Consequently the Io narrative in the *Alexandra* adduces one more argument for a later date of the poem.

The story of the Argonauts in Libya, of their steersman who died from a snake's bite and of Medea, who offered a welded golden chalice to Triton as a reward for his assistance in getting them safely past the rocks rising along the Libyan coast, also belongs to the Lycophronic treasury of rare stories.⁵¹ Lycophron liked to enrich his mythological narratives with short, but nevertheless impressive landscape descriptions, which may reflect a late Hellenistic fashion for mythological landscape painting.⁵² We find, for example, the Libyan sands (Λίβυσσαν ψάμμον) and African winds in the Nireus and Thoas story (*Al.* 1014-16), the Egyptian Delta with its web of Nilotic water channels in the Proteus story (*Al.* 119-20), a colourful picture of the Berbers: ἄγραυλος λαός ... Λίβυς, a Libyan nomadic tribe in the story of Guneus, Protoos and Eurypylos (*Al.* 893-4), θερειπότους γύας, a land irrigated by warm waters (of the Nile) (*Al.* 847), or δισσὰς πέτρας, two rocks in the *nostos* of Menelaus (*Al.* 836). In all likelihood Lycophron had in mind the Rocks of Andromeda by Jaffo, with their crags emerging from among the foam, only to sink in the deep blue and green waters of the sea, which attracted so much the romantic travellers of antiquity (Joseph.Fl., *BJ* 3, 9, 3; Paus. *Descr.* 4, 35, 9). I emphasize Lycophron's selection of the Greek Oriental myths pictured in their stylized Eastern setting, because in this respect he is unique among the Alexandrian poets. I do not share the opinion that he took amazingly little interest in Egypt.⁵³ Jouguet aptly remarked that the Greeks were interested in nothing but themselves.⁵⁴ We find hardly any allusion to the Egyptian landscape in the Alexandrian poetry. It is Sicily and Cos that inspired Theocritus; Callimachus collected a vast body of legends, but failed to notice the Egyptian lore, although it was not altogether unknown to Herodotus, Jouguet concluded. This is not quite correct. In fact Egypt sometimes

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 143.

⁵¹ Cf. a visit by Nireus and Thoas to the Libyan coast on their way to Italy (*Al.* 1011-1017).

⁵² P.H. von Blanckenhagen, Daedalus and Icarus on Pompeian Walls, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung* 75, 1968, pp. 106-143; W. Peters, *Landscape in Romano-Campanian Mural Painting*, Diss. Assen 1963.

⁵³ West 1984, p. 153, also n. 6.

⁵⁴ P. Jouguet, Les destinées de l'hellenisme dans l'Égypte gréco-romaine, *Chd'E* 19, 1935, pp. 89-108, here: p. 100.

makes its appearance in the Alexandrian poetry, for example in Herondas' *Mime* I (vv. 26-35), as the Greek El Dorado, where one can easily make a fortune, or in a band of Egyptian speaking rascals, who attack innocent people in Theocritus' *Idyll* 15 (vv. 48-50). As regards the Orientalist context Lycophron can be only matched by Aeschylus and Bion among the Greek poets. His 'Orientalist linguistics', his mythological and geographical knowledge speak for a very well supplied library behind his learning.⁵⁵

Now I would like to come to the second part of this more or less Orientalist review of the *Alexandra*, namely to the Eastern prophetic writings of the 2nd century BC in their reference to Lycophron's poem. For long it has been an established tradition to comment on Lycophron's *Alexandra* in its relation to other prophetic writings. Hensel discussed the phenomenon of the *Alexandra*'s prophetic verse, however kept the discussion exclusively within the framework of the Homeric tradition.⁵⁶ Ziegler crossed the boundaries of the strictly Classicist field and went in the Oriental direction. He concluded that the *Alexandra* has more in common with the *Sibylline Oracles* than with the Alexandrian poetry.⁵⁷ When I read the *Alexandra* I have a feeling that in many points it reveals a studied and conscious effort to imitate the literary technique of Eastern prophetic writings. This can be observed on both the stylistic as well as the ideological level, in both its language and content. I do not want to say that the *Alexandra* is an inferior or secondary production. Quite the contrary, its highly individualized and idiosyncratic language makes the *Alexandra* in many ways an unmatched creation, a work by a poet gifted with a rare artistic genius, imbued with unique erudition, one of the most outstanding representatives of the Callimachean and Euphorionic school. The Eastern prophetic writings only added to the stream of spiritual and literary inspirations which brought to life this fascinating, eclectic genre of poetry.

As regards language Lycophron's prophetic mimetism can be traced in recurrent expressions suggestive of visionary images which pretend to be written down during the prophetic trance, and also in lamentations enriched with onomatopoeic expressions: λεύσω σε, τλήμων (Al. 52, 216); Αἰαῖ, τάλαινα

⁵⁵ Ziegler 1927, 2378, emphasized Lycophron's advanced Homeric learning, which in his view speaks for a later date than the period of Philadelphus, when Zenodotus' learning was only in its beginnings.

⁵⁶ Hensel 1908.

⁵⁷ Ziegler 1927, 2380; time and again the problem comes up to the surface of the Lycophronic studies, cf. Sinko 1947, pp. 527 ff.; id. De Lycophronis tragici carmine Sibyllino, *Eos* 43, 1948/9, pp. 3 ff.; id. *Sprawozdania Komisji Filologii Klasycznej PAU* 49, 7, 1948, pp. 330 ff.; West 2000; R. Hendness, *Oracula Graeca quae apud scriptores Graecos Romanosque exstant*, 1877.

θηλαμών (Al. 31), of Troy; Αἰαῖ, στενάζω (Al. 307); αἰάζω 6 times in lamentations; Στένω, στένω σε διςσὰ καὶ τριπλᾶ (Al. 69) vs. Ἴλιον, οἰκτεῖρω σε (3 OS, 414), also of Troy; οἶμοι, δειλαίη, πότ' ἐλεύσεται ἡμαρ ἐκεῖνο (3 OS, 55); αἰαῖ σοι, Βαβυλῶν (3 OS, 303);⁵⁸ τάλαινα Αἴγυπτος κεκακουργομένη (P. Rain. Col. I, 4). We also find standard formulas used to assure the audience of the divinely inspired oracle's infallibility, and of its inevitable fulfillment: θήσει δ' ἀληθῆ. (...) σὺν κακῷ δέ τις μαθὼν, τὴν φοιβόληπτον αἰνέσει χελιδόνα (Al. 1458-60), vs. τὰ δὲ θέσφατα πάντα τελεῖται (3 OS, 364); καὶ συνέβη ἅπαντα τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ποπλίου ηθέντα γενέσθαι (Phlegon, *Mirabilia* III, 14).⁵⁹ Sometimes one may even have a feeling that the *Alexandra*'s sophisticated literary wording smacks of the Greek drawn from popular prophetic writings: παλιμπλανήτην (Al. 1239) and παλίμπλαγκτος (3 OS, 625), ὀψιτέκνοις (Al. 1227), and ὀψιγόνουσι (3 OS, 387), πλαγκτοί (Al. 952, 1028), πλαγχθέντας (Al. 654), and πολυπλάγκτοισιν (3 OS, 387).⁶⁰ Lycophron's impressive *bestiary* also seems to have been influenced by the prophetic writings.⁶¹ Its numerous animal metaphors compose the *Alexandra*'s bizarre zoological garden. Thoas appears as a wild pig (Al. 1013), Tydeus as a boar (Al. 1066), Podaleirios as a wolf (Al. 1034). The animal imagery ubiquitous in metaphors is naturally one more means to darken the expression. However at the same time it is one more feature the *Alexandra* shares with the prophetic writings. The subject has been already discussed by Konze and Ziegler.⁶² I am going to focus exclusively on the imagery of the red wolf in the prophetic literature. The wolf metaphor has many occurrences in the *Alexandra* (Al. 102, 147, 329, 504, 524, 1034, 1444), however the λύκος αἰθῶν (the red wolf) appears only twice in the poem: as a mask

⁵⁸ J. Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina*, 1902; *Oracula Sibyllina*, ed. A. Rzach, Wien 1891; A. Rzach, *RE* 2A, 2, 1923, 2123 ff., s.v. Sibyllinische Orakel; A. Paretti, *La Sibilla Babilonese nella propaganda ellenistica*, Firenze, 1943; A. Kurfess, *Sibyllinische Weissagungen. Urtext und Übersetzung*, 1951; V. Nikiprowetzky, *La troisième Sibylle*, 1970; J.J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, *SBLD* 13, Missoula 1974 (3-5OS); *Sibylline Oracles*, transl. J.J. Collins, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth, New York, 1983, pp. 317-472; J.-M. Nieto Ibáñez, *El hexámetro de Los Oráculos Sibyllinos*, Amsterdam 1992; H.W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, Routledge 1988.

⁵⁹ *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. Jacoby, 2B, Leiden, 1962, 257 f 36 III, 14.

⁶⁰ Stylistic coincidences enumerated by Ziegler 1927, 2380: αἰετὸς αἰθῶν (3 OS, 611; 14 OS, 224); πάσης γῆς σκῆπτρα κρατήσων (3 OS, 49; 8, 169; 14, 360), followed by Sinko 1947, p. 526.

⁶¹ S. West pointed to Aeschylus' *Suppl.* and *Orest.* as the source of the animal imagery in the *Alexandra*, West 2000, p. 160; Ziegler 1927, 2345.

⁶² Konze 1870, pp. 74-80; Ziegler 1927, 2345.

of Achilles in the Protesilaus scene (Al. 246), and in the plural for the sons of Telephos, Tyrsenos and Tarchon (Al. 1248). In his valued contribution to the work on ancient prophetic writings Gauger discussed the series of the three oracles documented by Phlegon of Tralleis, *Mirab.* III.⁶³ The third oracle was expressed by a Roman general Poplios (Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus?), overpowered by a divine madness inspired by Apollo in the sanctuary of Naupactos in Etolia (*FGrHist* 257 F36, III, 6-13). It happened after the Battle of Thermopylae (191 BC) during the war against Antiochus III. In his vividly described divine trance reminiscent of Plato's Sibylline passage in *Phaedrus* (244 B-E), Publius predicted the future course of the war with the Battle of Magnesia with detailed references to the following peace treaty included (*Mirab.* III, 8-9). Consequently we find in Publius' oracle a fine instance of *vaticinium ex eventu*, a literary technique frequently employed by the authors of the *Sibylline Oracles* as well as by Lycophron. In the final section of his oracle Publius predicted the ultimate fall of Rome. Soon afterwards a red wolf came down from the mountains and devoured the Roman general (ὕπὸ λύκου πυρροῦ εὐμεγέθους καταβρωθῆναι, *Mirab.* III, 11). However, his head remained untouched, still alive in those horrible circumstances prophesying the invasion army from Asia and the future fall of Rome.⁶⁴ Gauger remarked that the figure of the red wolf was unique in the oracular literature, and seemed to have been coined for the single instance of Publius' prophecy.⁶⁵ We can see that this is not so. I think the coincidence is meaningful. Lycophron apparently drew on the popular prophetic literature and borrowed the motif from this source. The red wolf appears in the drama as a servant of Apollo Lykeios (*Mirab.* III, 13, vv. 10-11). Alexandra's prophetic madness also comes from the Apollinic inspiration. At this point I think we are touching one of the mysteries of the *Alexandra* being on the one hand a highly intellectual creation, which on the other hand drew one of its main creative stimuli from the common folk poetry.

The date itself of Publius' oracle may be important for the chronology of Lycophron's poem. Publius' oracle came into existence in a reaction to the crushing defeat of Antioch III (191-189 BC), and took its final shape some time

⁶³ J.-D. Gauger, Phlegon von Tralleis, *Mirab.* III. Zu einem Dokument geistigen Widerstands gegen Rom, *Chiron* 10, 1980, pp. 225-261; *FGrHist* 257, F 36, III; A. Ludwich, Zu Phlegons *Mirab.* c. 3, *RhM* 41, 1886, 627 ff.; M. Holleux, Sur une passage de Phlegon de Tralles, *Etudes d'épigraphie et d'histoire grecques* 5, 1957, pp. 244 ff.

⁶⁴ A parallel motif of a speaking head in Plin. *HN* 7,53, cf. Gauger 1980, p. 232.

⁶⁵ Gauger 1980, p. 237; E. Wunderlich, Die Bedeutung der roten Farbe im Kultus der Griechen und Römer, *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 20, 1, 1925; A. Hermann, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 7, 403, s.v. Farbe; E. Riess, *RE* 18, 1, 1, 1939, 363, s.v. Omen.

in the early eighties. In the span of not over a decade the three main powers of the Mediterranean world were defeated by Rome: Hannibal (202 BC), Philip V (197 BC) and finally Antiochus III, the most powerful monarch of the Greek Hellenistic world. This large scale disaster had a paralyzing impact on the Greek world. Who, then, if not Hannibal or Antiochus III, the real heir of Alexander the Great, could resist the power of Rome? This invincible new power triumphs in Lycophron's verse: ἔξοχον ὥμη γένος (Al. 1233, the generation of exquisite power), or in γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης σκῆπτρα καὶ μοναρχίαν λαβόντες (Al. 1229-30, they will hold the sceptre of dominion over the earth and sea). These words could not have been written before the crucial years of 202-190 BC.⁶⁶ They originated in the atmosphere of historical fatalism, symptomatic of the whole of Lycophron's poem. It threw its sinister shadow on the whole Greek world and lasted, with the short Mithrydatean interlude, until the Battle of Carrhae, the event which marked the rise of a rival power in the East – Iran.

I think Lycophron's prophecy is a literary, erudite and mannerist response to the appearance of the Oriental prophetic writings in the 2nd century BC and their real impact on the course of Mediterranean history, their real influence on the feeling of the masses, which must have engaged the attention of a poet from the circle of isolated artistic perfectionists at the Alexandrian court. The *Alexandra* is naturally not a transcript of a real visionary trance, but a highly stylized, mimetic poem modeled on the Eastern oracular verse.⁶⁷ The scale of the social impact as well as the tone of authenticity of that 'sub-literary' or 'semi-literate',⁶⁸ but none the less influential literature must have deeply impressed the *Alexandra's* poet. Nisbet once pointed to a parallel literary phenomenon in his study on Vergil's *Eclogue* IV.⁶⁹ And probably under the impact of the fervent, religiously inspired

⁶⁶ In this connection different dates and circumstances of the origin have been suggested for the *Alexandra*, many of them focus on the 2nd century BC: Niebuhr, *RhM* 1, 108 ff. c. 197 BC, in the circle of Flamininus; von Holzinger 1895, the times of Pyrrhus; Beloch 1904, pp. 478 ff. or IV, 1, 1925 – the times of Hannibal, Philip V and Antioch III; S. Sudhaus, *RhM* 63, 1908, pp. 481-7, c. 197 BC, in the circle of Flamininus; similarly Ziegler 1927; Barber, *CAH* 7, 238, 2nd century BC; Josifović, *Lykophron Studien, Jahrb.d.Philosoph.Fakult.*, Novi Sad 2, 1957, c. 197 BC; West 1984, 'Deutero-Lycophron,' the Augustan period for the Roman passages; D. Musti, *Chronologia della Alessandra di Licofrone, Hesperia* 14, 2001, pp. 201-226, c. 146 BC; E. Kosmelatou, *Lycophron's Alexandra Reconsidered. The Attalid Connection, Hermes* 128, 2000, pp. 32-53, argues for the Attalid literary circles and the 1st half of the 2nd century BC.

⁶⁷ Cf. West 2000, p. 163.

⁶⁸ West 2000, p. 160; West 1984, p. 144.

⁶⁹ R. Nisbet, Vergil's Fourth Eclogue: Easterners and Westerners, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 25, 1978, pp. 59-78.

verse, Lycophron's cool and well-polished poetry at times resounds with the tunes of authenticity, as e.g. in Cassandra's lament for Troilus and Hector (Al. 258-313), in the story of the Locrian maidens (Al. 1141-73) or of the rape of Cassandra (Al. 348-365).

The sustained atmosphere of horror is symptomatic of the oracular poetry. It also makes up a component of Lycophron's mimetic literary technique. In the *Alexandra* however, it is visibly stigmatized by a disturbing exaggeration characteristic for Lycophron's studied mannerism. This can be observed in both the *Alexandra*'s phraseology and its imagery: κύμα κακῶν, the waves of evil (Al. 228), γόφῳ γυναικῶν καὶ καταρραγαῖς πέπλων, the women who lament and tear their robes (Al. 256), στυγνὸς ἄρταμος τέκνων, the horrible butcher of kids, of Cycnus (Al. 235), Παλαίμων βρεφοκτόνος, a demon divinity who demanded sacrifices of children (Al. 229), κατατομηθεὶς τύμβον αἱμάξεις πατρός, with your head severed off your blood will stain the grave of your father (Al. 313), ψυχρὸν δ' ἐπ' ἄκταις ἐκβεβρασμένον νέκυν, of a cold, dead body lying on the coastal rocks (Al. 396). We also have Artemis boiling the dead bodies of her victims in the cauldron (Al. 198-9), a prolonged description of funeral rites (Al. 365-75), the Eolian envoys buried alive (Al. 1061-2), etc. This is only a sample of phrases and images illustrative of the Lycophronic style full of the imagery of fire, agony, dead corpses, blind jealousy, perverse bestiality and monsters. There are numerous instances of such imagery in the prophetic literature. *The Oracle of the Potter* predicts that the stench of unburied corpses will reach the gates of the city (of Alexandria) (P.Oxy. 2332, Col. I, 6 f.). A similar image can be found in the Coptic *Asclepius*: οὐτε ἐσαυοῦ? διη ἡνοῦτε ἀλλὰ ζενκῶως (neither will it be full of gods, but of corpses) (NH Cod. VI, 8, 71, 35-36).⁷⁰

We also observe numerous analogies in general ideas, in composition, particular thematic motifs and technical devices between the *Alexandra* and the Eastern prophetic writings. The most fundamental is the universal conflict between East and West, Asia and Europe, an idea which became a historiosophic axis of many of the Hellenistic prophetic poems, a frame which housed their historical, mythological and reflexive material. Stephanie West has aptly written of 'an extraordinarily grand conception'⁷¹ of the *Alexandra*, which had its Greek antecedents in Aeschylus' *Persae* and Herodotus' *History*. The East-West conflict is also central for the interpretation of the Oriental prophecies which flourished in the 2nd century BC, whether of Egyptian (*The Oracle of the Potter*), Jewish (*The Book of Daniel*) or Iranian origin (*The Oracle of Hystaspes*). It is also valid

⁷⁰ Nag Hammadi Codices, V, 2-5 and VI, ed. D.M. Parrot, Leiden 1979.

⁷¹ West 2000, p. 154.

for the *Sibylline Oracles*.⁷² A successful literary conception of the Eastern perspective on the East-West conflict accommodated by Lycophron derived simultaneously out of two sources: Aeschylus' *Persae* and the Oriental prophetic poets. It is Cassandra, an Oriental princess, who paints dark pictures of the future Greek history in the *Alexandra*. Josifovič emphasized the poem's anti-Hellenic attitude.⁷³ This can be observed in the disparaging use of Γραικοί (Al. 532, 891, 1195, 1338; adj. 605), and only incidentally Ἀχαιοί (only once in Al. 989).⁷⁴ The poem's anti-Hellenic attitude is also reflected in the ideological sphere, that is in the overwhelmingly pessimistic vision of a doomed Greek history, which blatantly contradicts the Herodotean optimistic historiosophy with the successful, freedom-loving Greeks, the gods' favourites as its actors. Although Lycophron borrowed his historical pattern from Herodotus' *prooemium*, he abandoned and repudiated the Aeschylean and Herodotean triumphal spirit of Marathon and Salamis. The language of the Eastern prophecies often has undercurrents of anti-Greek and anti-Roman invective. The *Sibylline Oracles* pictured the Hellenistic monarchs as κλεψίγαμοι, rapists of others' wives (3 OS, 204), the Greeks in general as Ἕλληνες ὑπερφίαλοι καὶ ἀναγνοὶ (3 OS, 171); their rule is remarkable for wars, robberies, homosexual offences, child prostitution, oppression, slavery and extreme greediness (3 OS, 175 ff.). We find a similar picture in the *Oracle of the Potter*, where the Girdle-Wearers, the Macedonians and Greeks, are pictured as Τυφώνιοι (sons of the devil), and enemies of the ancient Egyptian gods (P.Oxy. 2332, Col. I, 2 ff.). The Coptic *Asclepius* offers a gallery of parallel apocalyptic images of the foreign invasion,

⁷² L. Koenen, Die Prophezeiungen des Töpfers, ZPE 2, 1968, pp. 178-209; F. Dunand, L'oracle du potier et la formation de l'apocalyptique en Égypte, in: *L'apocalyptique. Études d'histoire des religions* 3, ed. M. Philonenko, M. Simon, Paris 1977, pp. 41-67; M. Krause, Die literarischen Gattungen der Apokalypsen von Nag Hammadi, in: *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East. Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism*, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979, ed. D. Hellholm, Tübingen 1983, pp. 621-637; J. Bergman, Introductory Remarks on Apocalypticism in Egypt, *ibid.*, pp. 51-60; J.G. Griffiths, Apocalyptic in the Hellenistic Era, *ibid.* pp. 273-293; H.H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel*, Cardiff, 1935; E. Kocsis, Der Ost-Westgegensatz in den jüdischen Sibyllinen, *Novum Testamentum* 5, 1962; J.W. Swain, The Theory of Four Monarchies, *Classical Philology* 25, 1940, pp. 1-21; H. Windisch, *Die Orakel des Hystaspes*, 1929, (Lact. Inst. Div. 7, 15, 11); G. Widengren, Leitende Ideen und Quellen der iranischen Apokalypsik, in: *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East. Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism*, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979, ed. D. Hellholm, Tübingen 1983, pp. 77-162; on the *Sibylline Oracles* see above n. 58

⁷³ S. Josifovič, RE Suppl. 11, 1968, 888-930, s.v. Lycophron.

⁷⁴ Ziegler 1927, 2347.

which afflicted Egypt (e.g. Cod. VI, 8, 70, 24-26; *ibid.* 71, 5-7). *The Book of Daniel* presents the Macedonian kingdom as the fourth beast 'all-destroying, terrible, with teeth of iron and claws of bronze; it devours all within reach and tramples everything underfoot' (*Dan.* 7, 8).

The *Alexandra* also shared with the Eastern prophecies the form of an extensive mythological and historical epic marked by its 'loose and episodic structure'⁷⁵ which allowed for its natural accretion according to the demands of changing historical circumstances. The mythological and historical oracular poetry was naturally not unknown in the Greek literary tradition. However, the Greek oracular form never acquired a comparable monumental scale to hold a complex mythological, historical and religious content. As shown by Hensel, the oracles in the Alexandrian poetry were employed for narrow technical purposes, for example to give an account of events later than the narrated story.⁷⁶

Except for these major devices symptomatic of the prophetic genre, the oracular poetry is also remarkable for a set of minor literary motifs. One of them is the person of a saviour-king, the holy ruler who will come and rule with his sceptre over the whole earth (ἦξει δ' ἄγνός ἄναξ πάσης γῆς σκήπτρα κρατήσων) (3 OS, 49). This phraseology is encountered in the *Alexandra* as well (*Al.* 1229-30). The king sent down by God from heaven (3 OS, 286) will come from the sun (*ex oriente*) and will stop the wars. He will annihilate his enemies and make peace with other monarchs: καὶ τότ' ἀπ' ἡελίοιο θεὸς πέμψει βασιλῆα, / ὃς πᾶσαν γαῖαν πύσει πολέμοιο κακοῖο, / οὗς μὲν ἄρα κτείνας, οἷς δ' ὄρκια πιστὰ τελέσσας (3 OS, 652-4) (cf. 3 OS, 755 ff.). We find a strikingly similar vision of a future saviour in the *Alexandra*: εἷς τις παλαιστής, συμβαλὼν ἀλκὴν δορὸς / πόντου τε καὶ γῆς κείς διαλλαγὰς μολῶν (a unique wrestler, who will hold the power of his spear over the sea and earth, and will make peace) (*Al.* 1447-8). I do not think we need necessarily identify any particular historical personality behind the visionary words as has been repeatedly done by Lycophronic scholars. Philological ardour led Josifovič to extract from the phrase τὸ Τιτοῦς λαμπρὸν φάος, a bright light of the day, Tito (*Al.* 941; *Schol.* 941, Kinkel) the name of Titus

⁷⁵ West 1984, p. 145.

⁷⁶ Hensel 1908, on mythological oracles: Call. *Hymn* 4, 88; 5, 97 (the oracles for Teiresias and Acteon); Theocr. *Id.* 24; Apoll. Rhod. 2, 385-90, Phineus' oracle; the historical prophecies: Call. *Hymn* 4, 163 (the birth of Ptolemy II on the Island of Cos and the Keltic invasion in Greece). Hensel adduced examples from the earlier Greek literary tradition, mythological: Aesch. *Prometheus* 700; *Od.* 12, 37-140 (the oracle of Teiresias for Odysseus); *Il.* 19, 408, the oracle of Xanthus, and the historical oracles: Plataeae predicted in Aesch. *Pers.* 795, cf. the prediction of Salamis in *Al.* 1431-4, where Xerxes is pictured as a frightened girl at night.

Quinctius Flamininus (!),⁷⁷ while von Holzinger decoded the name of Pyrrhos from αἶθων λέων, burning lion or red lion (*Al.* 1439-41).⁷⁸ In fact the idea of a mysterious saviour-king was widespread, long-lived and commonly shared by the Jews, Egyptians, Iranians and other nations of the Near and Middle East of the Greco-Roman era. The *Sibylline Oracles* had their αἰετὸς αἶθων, red eagle, the great king from Asia (3 OS, 611) or the king from the sun (3 OS, 652), the Egyptian apocalyptic 'our king, the one of 55 years' (*P.Oxy.* 2332, col. II, 32 ff.) or the gracious king (εὐμενὴς ὑπάρχων), and the dispenser of wealth (ἀγαθὸν δοτῆρ) (*P.Rain.*, Col. II, 39 f.). The same legendary personality appeared as the Messianic saviour-king in the *Bible*, the king who will cross the Straits and rush against Rome in Publius' prophecy (Phleg., *Mir.* III, 7, vv. 7 ff.). The *Sibylline Oracles* are populated by mysterious personalities, like Beliar the Samaritan, who will deceive the Jews (3 OS, 63), χήρη, the widow (3 OS, 75), the king of the seventh kinship (3 OS, 192) or the destroyer from Italy (3 OS, 470). The efforts to detect the exact historical references have so far resulted in wide discrepancies as regards dating of the oracular collection known as the 3rd *Sibylline*, which were to originate after 140 BC according to I. Opelt; c. 88 BC, that is with reference to Mithridates VI according to Geffcken, or in the 30-40 BC according to W. Tarn.⁷⁹ The same seems to be relevant to the case of the frequently used generation device, as a means used to date apocalyptic events. It is a frequent instrument for the *Sibyllines* (3 OS, 108, 135, 608 etc.). The *Alexandra*'s μεθ' ἑκτὴν γένναν (after the 6th generation) has brought a range of solutions as to the identity of the person (Pyrrhos, Flamininus, Philip V, Antiochus III, or the 6th Etruscan king of Rome).⁸⁰ The oracular poetry is marked by its characteristically ambiguous and dark expressions and also the semi-historical material additionally obscured by the popular interpretation of history. It is the intriguing peculiarity of this poetry that its blurred and ambiguous, but its simultaneously impressive images can be in fact read and reinterpreted again and again in changing historical circumstances. In other words this poetry retains a secret of longevity and revival within the treasure of its literary technique. Gauger recalled a poem by the Polish romantic poet Juliusz Słowacki, which predicted the future coming of the saviour Slavonic pope, and referred to the widespread popular belief shared in Poland in the late 1970ties, that the oracle actually came true after nearly 150 years

⁷⁷ Josifovič 1968, 928.

⁷⁸ After Ziegler 1927, 2357.

⁷⁹ Gauger 1980, p. 247f.

⁸⁰ *Schol.* 1446, Kinkel; Ziegler 1927, 2354 ff.; Josifovič 1968, 925 ff.; P. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandra*, II, 1972, 1065-7, n. 331; A. Hurst, *Sur la date de Lycophron*, *Mélanges P. Collart*, Lausanne, 1976, pp. 231-4; Musti 2001, pp. 201-226.

with the election of John Paul II.⁸¹ The Polish folk tradition also knows another influential poem, the *Prophecy of VERNYHORAH*, allegedly composed by a legendary Ukrainian *aoidos* of the 18th century, a poem which has been read throughout the 20th century by the educated and uneducated and regarded as particularly apt for the dramatic upheavals of the East European modern history. We can actually sometimes recognize blurred shapes of some historical events in the oracular poetry, like the Keltic invasion in the Balkans referred to by the 3 OS, 509-10. However frequently we are bound to follow semi-historical, semi-exact or pseudo-historical narratives, as in Publius' oracle, where we hear of a king who will cross the Straits and join his forces with an Epirotic ruler, which is meaningless from the strictly historical perspective. A passage in the *Alexandra* (Al. 801-2) allegedly alluded to the murder of Heracles, the son of Barsine (309 BC) (*Schol.* 801, Kinkel). This is another interesting point, which refers to the nature of the popular prophetic writings. Why was it Alexander's boy who emerged from the dark magma of the dense prophetic verse? Why not some other leading historical figure? The event itself seems meaningless to the professional historians. There is an academic history, with its exactness, its scholarly methodology and its own hierarchy, and a folk, essentially oral history, which was impressed by the fate of Alexander's boy as particularly moving and symptomatic of the cruel times. I think that in this point Lycophron, endowed with a penetrating mind, managed to imitate one of the important components of the folk oracular genre.

So far I have emphasized the similarities between Lycophron and the Oriental anonymous poets. In fact the differences between them are both numerous and important. Lycophron's impressive historical, mythological and geographical erudition is by no means distant from popular folk knowledge. Lycophron's well-selected vocabulary of old literary standing, his linguistic maestra in creating neologisms stand in opposition to the colloquial idiom of the semi-literary Greek of the anonymous Oriental authors. His mimetic, studied prophetic tone is diametrically opposed to the original, religious inspiration of the folk poets. Lycophron's intellectual pessimism and historical fatalism confront the anonymous poets' real engagement in the historical process. His lack of any political ambition contradicts the Eastern prophets' will to influence the course of historical events.⁸² And finally his narrow intellectual audience differed

⁸¹ Gauger 1968, p. 245, n. 63.

⁸² Callisthenes recalled the Sibylline Oracles in reference to Alexander (Strabo 17, 1, 43); Augustus destroyed the *Sibyllines* as politically subversive (Suet. Aug. 31, 1), cf. West 2000, p. 163; L. Demougeout, Saint Jérôme. Les oracles sibyllins et Stilicon, *Revue des Études Anciennes* 54, 1952, pp. 83-92; W. Speyer, *Büchervernichtung und Zensur des Geistes bei Heiden, Juden und Christen*, 1981.

significantly from the wide circle of readers and listeners of the Oriental prophets. Lycophron's poem is a studied imitation remarkable for its mannerism and eclecticism. Nevertheless we can discern in it a moral streak and an authentic religious inspiration, particularly conspicuous in the central motif of the divine curse cast on the Greeks for the offences they committed in Troy, and also in the prolonged descriptions of suffering experienced by the captives or the sacrileges committed in the sanctuaries. However, this cannot match the fervent, authentic religious inspiration embedded in the Oriental prophetic writings. Thus we have touched the irrational side of this poetry. It is actually difficult to cope with it in a scholarly paper. The oracular literature has its well-guarded secrets. The author almost always remains anonymous. He or she expresses his own fears of the imminent historic or natural disaster. This stream of deep emotions takes the form of prophecy, which naturally cannot be expected to offer exact historical knowledge. The point was once made by the indispensable Plato. In *Phaedrus* Plato ironically juxtaposed visiting professors from abroad admired by the young Athenians, no matter what they actually had to say, and the rustle of leaves in the holy oaks of Dodona, which can tell the truth (*Phaedr.* 275, B-C).

In the concluding part of my paper I would like to refer to the question of Lycophron's disputable identity and chronology from the perspective of the above adduced material. The collection of Semitic and Egyptian loan words may point in the direction of Alexandria, a great melting pot of nations. The Egyptian references sometimes are hidden behind Lycophronic metaphors, as can be seen in the instance of κρέξ (Al. 513), a label for Helen, an ill-omened wife. The *Scholiast* explained that the sea bird κρέξ should be read as ibis, a bad omen for newly married couples (*Schol.* 513, Kinkel). The poet's focus on Cyprus, a pearl in the crown of the Alexandrian court, with its mythology and Lycophron's tiny treasure box of Cyprian words, can be also adduced in this connection (Al. 447-591). My impression is that the crucial dates for the origin of the *Alexandra* are lodged in the defeat of Antiochus III (190 BC), the day of Eleusis (168 BC), which opened the period of the direct Roman intervention in Egyptian affairs, and the expulsion of the Alexandrian scholars and the subsequent imposition of the military supervision over the Museion by Ptolemy VIII in 145/4 BC. This factor can explain why the *Alexandra* does not have the usual panegyric tones so symptomatic of the Alexandrian poetry. I acknowledge the relevance of the testimony offered by the *Ostrakon Hor* (vv. 22 f.), the first mention ever of Rome in the Egyptian sources. The testimony can be dated c.158 BC.⁸³ Hor informed that 'Numenios went to Rome' (*hrm*).

⁸³ F. Hoffmann, *Ägypten. Kultur und Lebenswelt in griechisch-römischer Zeit. Eine Darstellung nach den demotischen Quellen*, Berlin, 2000, pp. 190-194.

The role played by Numenios in the negotiations with Rome was corroborated by Polybius (30, 16, 1) and Livy (45, 13, 4-8). I think the above dates and factors draw a chronological frame for the genesis of *the Alexandra* (190-145 BC) and explain the overwhelming sense of historic doom which permeates the whole poem.

Ziegler was intrigued by the remarkably late testimonies of the *Alexandra*'s literary impact.⁸⁴ We find the external evidence only as late as in the Augustan period, in Ovid's *Ibis* (531) and Theon's commentary.⁸⁵ Consequently there is a considerable gap in the *Alexandra*'s literary influence, which can be explained by the historical circumstances however. The 3rd century BC, with its relative political stability and the developed institution of Lagid, Seleucid, Attalid and Antigonid royal patronage, was diametrically different from the 2nd century BC with its upheavals and the resulting blurred image of its history of art and literature. How little we know about Bion, Moschus or the anonymous poet of *Bion's Epitaph*, and the again anonymous poets from Theocritus' bucolic collection. The author of the *Alexandra* was a child of that epoch, and shared the fate of other poets and artists. If everything is deceptive in this poem why not the very name of the author? The poem's signature perhaps points at least in the true geographical direction. Someone saved it from oblivion and brought it to Rome, probably after the fall of Alexandria. The 1st century BC was a period of a developed trade in Hellenic artistic and intellectual goods in Italy.⁸⁶ Many fake works allegedly signed by Lysippus, Pheidias or Apelles were sold for good money on the Roman *nouveaux riches* market. The same must have been valid for Greek manuscripts. It was probably better to sell a manuscript under the name of an influential Pleiad dramatist than under one unknown in Rome, or as anonymous script, if the name was altogether lost. Who knows then, perhaps S. West was right when she suspected a 'Deutero-Lycophron' from the Augustan period. The *Alexandra*'s Eulogy of the Aeneads could in fact have played a similar role to all fake signatures of Pheidias or Polycleitus on the bases of inauthentic sculptures. I do not

⁸⁴ Ziegler 1927, 2350 ff.

⁸⁵ Giese, *De Theone grammatico*, Monasterii, 1868; the *Alexandra* passed unattended by the influential literary critics of the Julio-Claudian period: Ps. Longinus and Caecilius of Kale Akte, Ziegler 1927, 2351, and also by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and later by Quintilianus. It was mentioned by Statius (*Silv.* 5, 3, 157). The *Alexandra* actually came into circulation in the 2nd century AD (Lucian, *Lexiphanes* 25; Artemidorus 4, 63; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5, 50, 3); papyrological evidence: *P.Oxy.* 2094, 3445 (2nd cent. AD), *P.Oxy.* 3446 (2nd cent. AD), *P.Oxy.* 4428 (early 3rd cent. AD), *P.Oxy.* 4429 (1/2nd cent. AD), *P.Mon.* 156 (1/2nd cent. AD) – ed. A. Hartmann, *Philologus* 76, 1920, 228-33; A. Carlini, ed. *Papiri letterari greci della Bayrische Staatsbibliothek*, 1986, 39, pp. 84-88; following West 2001, n. 13, p. 129f.; Ziegler 1927, 2352.

⁸⁶ Cf. J. Pollitt, *The Impact of Greek Art on Rome*, *TAPA* 108, pp. 155-174.

want to press my point too strongly. Ziegler resolutely defended the poem's integrity.⁸⁷ I share this opinion with him. I have been reading and rereading it again and again, unable to find stylistic, lexical or phraseological discontinuity. However, the *Alexandra* was woven of labyrinthine literary traps and blind alleys into a confusing literary puzzle. I am not sure if I have not been deceived too by this mysterious poetry.

The 2nd century BC brought a large scale historical confrontation between the Greeks and Macedonians and the Orientals. The Egyptians raised arms against their Greek lords, and were followed by the Jewish Maccabees, the Cilicians, Elamites and Parthians in the Seleucid kingdom. The national liberation movements basing on the offended religious feelings were sometimes attended by the social revolutions, which also attracted many of the Greeks, as happened with the utopian kingdom of Aristonikos' Heliopolis or in Egypt. Those popular Oriental movements brought a harvest in the shape of the widely circulating anonymous and influential oracular poetry and prose, a literary phenomenon of its own. This period of turmoil also brought an unexpected fruit in the learned Alexandrian poem, which can in some of its aspects be interpreted in the light of the Eastern prophetic writings.

⁸⁷ Ziegler 1927, e.g. 2328 ff., 2348 ff.