

THE COMPOSITION OF CALLIMACHUS' *AETIA* IN THE LIGHT OF *P. OXY.* 2258

Rudolf Pfeiffer (*Callimachus*, ii.xxxvi–xxxvii) believed that, as a young man, Callimachus wrote four books of *Aetia*. To these the poet added in his old age a Reply to his Critics (fr. 1), and a slightly revised version of his recent occasional elegy, the Lock of Berenice (fr. 110, now including a nuptial rite which has survived only in the translation by Catullus, 66.79–88); this revised *Coma* became the last poem in *Aetia* book 4, to be followed by an Epilogue (fr. 112) which may mark a transition to the *Iambi*. Pfeiffer's theory generally held the field until the brilliant article of P. J. Parsons, in *ZPE* 25 (1977), 1–50. With the help of newly recovered papyrus fragments Parsons showed that a previously unplaced elegy celebrating a Nemean victory (fr. 383 Pf.) was connected to the story of Molorchus (frs. 54–9), who entertained Heracles before that hero killed the Nemean lion and instituted the Nemean Games; thus the poem belonged to *Aetia* book 3. Furthermore, various pieces of evidence converge (Parsons, pp. 46–8) to make it probable, if not wholly certain, that this substantial poem (some 200 lines long) stood first in its book. So it appears that, at least in the final form of the *Aetia*, books 3–4 were framed by two poems honouring the wife of Ptolemy III Euergetes, namely *Victoria Berenices* (Parsons' title) and *Coma Berenices*.

Soon afterwards a further important advance was made by E. Livrea (*ZPE* 34 [1979], 37ff.), who perceived, on grounds of subject-matter as well as papyrology, that the poor man who sets a mousetrap in fr. 177 Pf. must be none other than Molorchus; note particularly the probable mention of Cleonae in fr. 177.37 Pf. = *Supplementum Hellenisticum* 259.37. Thus a new fragment of 38 lines accrued to the poem.

These discoveries have some implications for the composition of the *Aetia*. Addition of a *Coma Berenices* (94 lines in Catullus' version) to a pre-existent *Aetia* book 4 could be countenanced easily enough, but, as Parsons says (p. 50), it would have required a much more radical, and therefore less plausible, revision for Callimachus to have added *Victoria Berenices* to a pre-existent *Aetia* book 3. Accordingly Parsons suggested that the original *Aetia* contained only books 1–2, united by the conversation with the Muses; then in his old age Callimachus compiled two more books, partly at least from poems already composed, and gave them a frame of two poems honouring Queen Berenice. Parsons' view has, I think, been widely accepted; Professor Lloyd-Jones wrote in *SIFC* 77 (1984), 56 'No-one has yet argued against the simple modification of Pfeiffer's theory of the two editions of the *Aetia* which Mr. Parsons based on this discovery. The first edition comprised two books only.'

Let us now consider *P. Oxy.* 2258, the most remarkable of our Callimachean papyri.¹ This codex might be of any date between about A.D. 500 and A.D. 700. We cannot be sure that it contained the complete poetical works of Callimachus, but fragments have been identified from every *hymn* except no. 5, from the *Hecale*,² *Coma Berenices* and *Victoria Sosibii*. In addition to the text, there are also marginal scholia written by the same 'Coptic' hand but in smaller letters; these are often extremely

¹ Edited by E. Lobel in *P. Oxy.* 20 (1952), 69ff., with photographs, plates xiii–xvi. Pfeiffer was able to use this before publication for his 1949 volume of *Fragments*; it is papyrus no. 37 in Pf. ii.xxiv, and no. 186 in Pack².

² *SH* 290–1 as well as the piece mentioned by Pfeiffer, i.506–7.

learned and valuable.³ As far as the *Aetia* is concerned, first of all observe that the *Coma* (C frs. 1–2 of the papyrus) appears not in the *Aetia*,⁴ but as a separate occasional elegy, immediately followed by the *Victoria Sosibii* (fr. 384 Pf.). In the text of the *Coma* we find no nuptial rite (Catullus 66.79–88); on the other hand there is a final invocation of Berenice's 'mother', Queen Arsinoe (fr. 110.94^{a-b}, starting χ[αῖρε], φίλη τεκέεcci⁵), which is absent from Catullus. The ten lines of the nuptial rite could have been omitted accidentally from the papyrus, but I still find more attractive Pfeiffer's opinion that *P. Oxy.* 2258 represents the original form of the *Coma Berenices* as an occasional elegy, while Catullus translated the revised form which Callimachus later incorporated into *Aetia* book 4.

A tiny scrap of *P. Oxy.* 2258 B fr. 1 can be identified as coming from the story of Acontius and Cydippe.⁶ So the codex definitely included *Aetia* book 3. There is also (B fr. 2 'Front') a small fragment of Pfeiffer's *Mousetrap* (fr. 177.4–6), which Livrea has shown to belong to the Molorchus episode, and therefore to Parsons' *Victoria Berenices*:

Fr. 2 Front

νεμ. [[παιδι]νεμο[υσαμερος.]
. . . μελλε. [[α]ρεμελλεβ[οωναπομεσσαβα]
]μηνιςμ[]μη[νεϊσινυπηελιου]
]κτοριγιβας. [
] τ[.]ρ. [
] β. α. [
] . . νρ[.] . οδ?α . . [

Traces of two more lines followed by blank papyrus

This little piece was known to Pfeiffer;⁷ in fr. 177.6 it supports the variant εἶσι μετ' (so an *Iliad* scholiast) against εἶσιν ὑπ' of *PSI* 1218. Livrea mentions it (to discuss the marginal scholia) in two articles,⁸ but neither he nor *SH* lists the fragment among sources for the text; as far as I am aware nobody has considered that the piece may have larger implications. Parsons (p. 48) allows that *Victoria Berenices*, like *Coma Berenices*, may have circulated by itself as an occasional elegy before being included in the *Aetia*. So might our fragment of *P. Oxy.* 2258 be from a separate version of *Victoria Berenices* rather than from *Aetia* book 3? This possibility cannot be refuted, but we have seen that the codex also included Acontius and Cydippe from *Aetia* 3. Also, on the other side of our fragment there is no text, but the remains of marginal scholia which Pfeiffer referred to another episode from *Aetia* 3 (I shall return to this point shortly).

We cannot be absolutely certain that *P. Oxy.* 2258 included *Aetia* book 4, but, since we have identified *Aetia* 3 (Acontius and Cydippe), that would seem highly probable. Now I find it hard to believe that our scribe could have been so chalcenic as to

³ E.g. quoting at length from a hexameter poem (*SH* 391) by a previously unknown author called Diophilus or Diophila which gives instructions where to find the constellation Coma Berenices in the sky.

⁴ Where it would presumably be followed by the Epilogue to the *Aetia* (fr. 112).

⁵ Pfeiffer saw the correct interpretation of this in ii.116.

⁶ Fr. 74 on one side, and fr. 75.3–6 on the other; cf. Pf. i.501.

⁷ i.501 on frs. 84–6 (for the scholia on the other side) and p. 503 on fr. 177.4–6.

⁸ *ZPE* 34 (1979), 38, and *Miscellanea Papyrologica* (ed. R. Pintaudi, 1980), 138. In both places the reference is inaccurate, with 'B' having been transformed into '13', and fr. '2' omitted. In the list of sources (*ZPE* 34 [1979], 40, under C) read *PSI* 1218 (for 1228) and 11–20 init. (for 1–20).

write out only slightly differing versions of the *Coma Berenices* (together with a wealth of marginal scholia!) *twice* – once in *Aetia* 4, and then again among the occasional elegies. Therefore, if *P. Oxy.* 2258 contained *Aetia* 4, it was surely a book lacking the *Coma Berenices*; even if it did not include *Aetia* 4, one might argue that it *presupposes* an *Aetia* 4 without the *Coma*. On the other hand it seems that *P. Oxy.* 2258 *did* include Parsons' *Victoria Berenices* in *Aetia* 3. Mr Parsons naturally stressed the unifying force of two stately poems honouring Euergetes' Queen: *Victoria Berenices* at the head of book 3, *Coma Berenices* at the end of book 4. One is reluctant to postulate too many successive stages of the *Aetia*; would not the two poems concerning Berenice have been incorporated at the same time? Yet *P. Oxy.* 2258 suggests an *Aetia* with the *Victoria* but no counterbalancing *Coma*.

Before trying to solve this puzzling problem, let us turn to the marginal scholia on the 'back' of *P. Oxy.* 2258 B fr. 2:

Back

[...[
]λασατρ[
].ροιγαροιθε.[
.αυτα:.ip[
5 [εντωτρεχε.[
].ν .τονμελ.[
].ξενος.λα.[
].ινευμεγεθη.[
]. .σεω[.] .νεπ.λ.[
10].[.]ν.[.]χαλακε.[
].[.]δρ[.]αντα[.]][
].[.]λ.[.]τασ[

These are very badly mutilated, but in lines 10–11 Lobel tentatively discerned mention of a ‘bronze statue’, χαλκε [./].[ἀν]δρ[ι]άντα[.]. Now there was indeed a poem from *Aetia* 3 in which a bronze statue played an important part: Euthycles the Locrian (frs. 84–5 Pf.). The Olympic victor Euthycles was sent by his fellow-citizens on an embassy, from which he returned with some mules presented to him by his host. The Locrians falsely suspected him of treason, and voted to damage his statue. But when a plague fell on the city, the people learnt from Apollo that it had been sent because of the dishonour done to Euthycles. Therefore they honoured his statue equally to that of Zeus, and, moreover, they set up an altar... (cf. Diegesis 1.37ff.). In the actual text of Callimachus, fr. 85.8–9, Barber and Maas⁹ wished to supply ἀπὸ [χαλκοῦ/εἰκόν]a. Pfeiffer¹⁰ referred these marginal scholia to Euthycles the Locrian, pointing out that the few other legible words seem not incompatible with Euthycles: in line 5, perhaps ἐν τῷ τρέχε[ι]ν, in line 7 ξένος (compare Diegesis 1.42, Euthycles receives the mules παρὰ τινος ξένου). Of course this is all speculative, but it has some plausibility. In one sense it would be welcome to find scholia relating to another poem from book 3 on the reverse of the *Mousetrap* (= *Molorchus* = *Victoria Berenices*). But there is also a considerable awkwardness, in that the Diegeses¹¹ show Euthycles the Locrian to have been the *last* poem of book 3, and Parsons has argued very convincingly that *Victoria Berenices* was the *first* poem of the book. It is obvious that we cannot have scholia to the last poem of book 3 on the back of text from the first

⁹ *CQ* 44 (1950), 168 (cf. Pfeiffer ii.114). Lines 10–11 describe the ‘Temesaeon’ bronzework of the statue.

10 i.503.

¹¹ Which reflect the final form of the *Aetia*, with *Coma Berenices* at the end of book 4.

poem. Pfeiffer, it should be said, suspected that his *Mousetrap* was the first poem in book 4.

We still have to determine the relative order of the 'front' and 'back' of *P. Oxy.* 2258 B fr. 2.¹² This codex seems for the most part to have had about 23 lines to the page;¹³ our fragment clearly comes from the foot of a page (on the 'front', text followed by scholia below, on the 'back' just scholia). Supposing that the 'front' came first, the text on the 'back' should finish round about *SH* 259 (= fr. 177 Pf.).^{28–30}, still in the account of the mice's depredations. We would then have to admit that the apparent reference to a 'bronze statue' in the scholia was illusory, for it could hardly relate to the corresponding or nearby lines of the *Mousetrap*, which are preserved. So it seems most likely that the 'back' precedes the 'front'. If the papyri of the Molorchus story are correctly ordered in *SH*, the scholia would refer to some earlier part of the same action; that is entirely possible, since the text is lacunose.¹⁴

The placing of *SH* 259 (*Mousetrap*) seems to rest on Pfeiffer's belief that his fr. 176 (= *SH* 257.21–34) came from the upper part of the same column as his fr. 177. But the *SH* editors warn that this cannot be regarded as certain, and therefore the rightful place of the *Mousetrap* within the Molorchus story remains open to debate. In *SH* 260, Heracles, still before his combat with the Nemean lion, is apparently again addressing Molorchus. Thus, in the *SH* arrangement, 257 and 260 belong to a conversation of Heracles and Molorchus, which is interrupted in 259 by the coming of evening and the setting of Molorchus' mousetraps.¹⁵ *SH* 259 does not seem to contain any reference to Heracles; Livrea¹⁶ saw one in line 14 ξ[εἰ]νοί (if that is the right reading), but surely the meaning is not 'guests' but 'hosts', i.e. the householders who willy nilly play host to the mice. In line 15 Molorchus has been engaged in some unspecified work, rather casually described,¹⁷ which he abandons (ῥ[ε]ψεν, 16) in order to deal with the mice. If Heracles were present at this juncture, one might expect the old man to be more vigorously engaged in welcoming him (as e.g. in Ovid's Baucis and Philemon). Is it possible, therefore, that in *SH* 259 Heracles has not yet arrived? Professor T. Gelzer¹⁸ has suggested that *SH* 259 should be placed before *SH* 256–7, and this idea seems to me to merit serious consideration. The opening of 259 presents a peaceful scene: a woman (?Molorchus' wife¹⁹) is preparing a meal (2–4), the old man himself doing an odd job around the house (cf. 15); the time is evening (5ff.). In such hospitality stories this is regularly the hour at which guests arrive.²⁰ For the general atmosphere, one might compare Ovid, *Fasti* 5.497ff., in which Hyrieus receives three gods:

Tempus erat quo versa iugo referuntur aratra,
et pronus saturae lac bibit agnus ovis.
forte senex Hyrieus, angusti cultor agelli,
hos videt, exiguum stabat ut ante casam.
atque ita 'longa via est, nec tempora longa supersunt,'
dixit, 'et hospitibus ianua nostra patet'.

¹² I am grateful to Mr Parsons for alerting me to the implications of this point.

¹³ Lobel, *P. Oxy.* 20 (1952), 70.

¹⁴ Parsons points to a mention of the Nemean Games (not yet founded) in the scholia to *SH* 257.26. ¹⁵ Cf. *SH* p. 115.

¹⁶ *Miscellanea Papyrologica* (ed. Pintaudi), 138 'Hercules Molorchus hospes respicitur' (cf. *ZPE* 34 [1979], 40). ¹⁷ Maas supplemented the line ὁ οἱ μετὰ [χερ]εῖν ξ[κε]ιτο.

¹⁸ In an unpublished paper (which I have not seen).

¹⁹ Cf. Livrea in *Misc. Pap.* p. 137, who suggests that the 'child' in *SH* 259.4 may be Molorchus' son.

²⁰ Pfeiffer notes that his fr. 766 *inc. auct.* ἐπείριον ξένον might suit Heracles in this story, or Theseus in the *Hecale*.

It seems to me that *SH* 259 would make a very suitable beginning for the poem; Molorchus' troubles with the mice humorously parallel in miniature the plight of the whole area, terrorized by the Nemean lion. Perhaps Heracles arrives soon after the end of *SH* 259.

I have suggested that *P. Oxy.* 2258 may have presented a surprising form of the *Aetia*, with Molorchus in book 3, but no *Coma Berenices* in book 4. On the other side of the tiny fragment relating to Molorchus (B fr. 2) are scholia which Pfeiffer with some plausibility referred to Euthycles the Locrian. The *Mousetrap* (*SH* 259) may, as Gelzer believed, belong earlier in the Molorchus poem – perhaps indeed at the very beginning (this could revive the possibility that our scholia relate to a different action, viz. Euthycles). Very tentatively I put forward the following hypothesis, which might embrace all the above inferences. The *Aetia* did originally contain four books (as Pfeiffer thought), and Molorchus appeared in the first edition of *Aetia* 3, immediately after Euthycles the Locrian, but without the proem²¹ (*SH* 254) celebrating Berenice's chariot victory, which was still some years in the future. *P. Oxy.* 2258 B fr. 2 'front' was the first page of the Molorchus poem in its original form; thus *SH* 259.1 did not stand more than about 16 lines into the poem.²² Even without Queen Berenice, Molorchus would be a substantial and satisfying poem. In so far as it concerned Heracles' foundation of the Nemean Games, it had a companion piece in *Aetia* book 3, namely the Elean Nuptial Rite (frs. 76–77a Pf.) connected with Heracles' foundation of the Olympian Games. In his old age, at the same time as incorporating *Coma Berenices* into *Aetia* 4, Callimachus added to his Molorchus the proem celebrating the Queen's chariot victory at Nemea (*SH* 254); this was a piece of poetical as well as political opportunism, since it gave the whole an appropriate Pindaric structure. He also changed the order of episodes in book 3:²³ Molorchus, which had previously followed Euthycles the Locrian, now occupied a proud position at the head of the book and became *Victoria Berenices*, corresponding, as Mr Parsons observed, to *Coma Berenices* at the end of *Aetia* 4.

Perhaps one day we will obtain some new evidence to test this hypothesis. I am not in any way disputing Parsons' conclusions about his *Victoria Berenices*, but suggesting that they may have applied only to the final version of the poem. My one point of disagreement with him is that I think it more likely that the original *Aetia* contained four books, rather than just two.

A last thought on *P. Oxy.* 2258. One might have expected Callimachus' own considered and final arrangement of his *Aetia* (*Victoria* at the beginning of book 3, *Coma* at the end of book 4 followed by the Epilogue, fr. 112) to obliterate the earlier form. Yet our latest Callimachean papyrus, equipped with full and learned scholia, still has an 'obsolete' arrangement and text. This seems proved beyond reasonable doubt for the *Coma Berenices* by juxtaposition with *Victoria Sosibii*, the absence of the Nuptial Rite, but the presence of a final invocation to Queen Arsinoe.²⁴ I suspect that the same may apply to Callimachus' Molorchus poem.²⁵

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²¹ Parsons (*ZPE* 25 [1977], 41, 42) suggests that Callimachus may have returned to Berenice in an Epilogue; it seems from the *Coma* that our poet was quite prepared to insert new lines (the nuptial rite, Catullus 66.79–88) in a pre-existent poem.

²² Perhaps considerably less, if the previous action (?Euthycles) spilled over to the first part of *P. Oxy.* 2258 B fr. 2 'front'.

²³ This could easily be done, since in books 3–4 one action followed another without connexion.

²⁴ See *P. Oxy.* 20 (1952), 88.

²⁵ I am grateful to Mr Parsons and Professor Lloyd-Jones for comments (which should not of course be taken to imply agreement with the hypothesis put forward here). A preliminary form of this paper was read to the Corpus Christi classical seminar in Oxford in February 1986.