

## A COLD RECEPTION IN CALLIMACHUS' VICTORIA BERENICES (S.H. 257–265)

### I. INTRODUCTION

Callimachus' *Victoria Berenices* has received a good deal of scholarly attention since its first publication in 1976, both from textual critics, attempting to clarify uncertain readings, and from specialists in Latin poetry, eager to trace allusions to Callimachus in Vergil, Statius, or Ovid.<sup>1</sup> While the search for Callimachean influence on the later texts has proved quite fruitful, it opens up the possibility of reading certain issues inappropriately backwards into the Hellenistic material. The discovery of (limited) parallels may lead to an assumption of complete agreement that misrepresents the earlier, more fragmentary text. I would like to consider one particular incident in the *Victoria Berenices* that has fallen prey to this fate, namely the reception of Heracles by the farmer Molorcus.<sup>2</sup>

### II. THE TEXTS

According to the reconstruction of the Callimachean fragments by H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons in their *Supplementum Hellenisticum* (1983), Heracles sets out from Argos to find the Nemean lion, and stops at Molorcus' farm in Cleonae to ask for directions. Surprised to find the countryside overgrown with weeds and thistles, Heracles asks the reason for such neglect (257.13–17). Molorcus explains that the

<sup>1</sup> The original publication was that of C. Meillier, 'Callimacque (P.L. 76d, 76abc, 82, 84, 111c)', *CRIPPEL* 4 (1976), 257–360; the text was edited and explained by P. Parsons, 'Callimachus' *Victoria Berenices*', *ZPE* 25 (1977), 1–50; an additional fragment was inserted by E. Livrea, 'Der Liller Kallimachos und die Mausefallen', *ZPE* 34 (1979), 37–42. The most accessible text and commentary are now that of H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons (eds.), *Supplementum Hellenisticum* (Berlin and New York, 1983), pp. 100–17, whose text of the 'Victoria Berenices' I use throughout this paper. Critical works include the following: R. Kassel, 'Nachtrag zum neuen Kallimachos', *ZPE* 25 (1977), 51; W. Luppe, 'Zum Anfang des Liller Kallimachos', *ZPE* 29 (1978), 36, and 'Kallimachos fr. 383, 10 Pf.', *ZPE* 31 (1978), 43–4; F. Bornmann, 'Zum Siegeslied des Kallimachos auf Berenike, P. Lille 79c III 6', *ZPE* 31 (1978), 35, and 'Nuovi ritrovamenti', *Atene e Roma* 23 (1978), 187–8; E. Livrea, 'Nota al nuovo Callimaco di Lille', *ZPE* 32 (1978), 7–10, and 'Polittico Callimacheo Contributi al Testo della Victoria Berenices', *ZPE* 40 (1980), 21–6, and 'Callimachi Fragmentum de Muscipulis (177 Pf.)', in R. Pintaudi (ed.), *Miscellanea Papyrologica* (Florence, 1980), pp. 135–40; A. Barigazzi, 'Callimaco e i cavalli di Berenice (Pap. Lille 82)', *Prometheus* 5 (1979), 267–71, and 'Per la ricostruzione di Callimaco di Lille', *Prometheus* 6 (1980), 1–20; E. Livrea, A. Carlini, C. Corbato and F. Bornmann, 'Il nuovo Callimaco di Lille', *Maia* 32 (1980), 225–53; R. Thomas, 'Callimachus, the Victoria Berenices, and Roman Poetry', *CQ* 33 (1983), 92–113, and 'Proteus and the Sealherd (Callim. SH Frag. 254.6)', *CP* 81 (1986), 31; A. S. Hollis, 'The Composition of Callimachus' *Aetia* in the Light of P. Oxy. 2258', *CQ* 36 (1986), 467–71; N. Krevans, 'P. Oxy. 2258 B Fr. 2: A Scholion to Callimachus' *Victoria Berenices*?', *ZPE* 65 (1986), 37–8; C. Meillier, 'Papyrus de Lille, Callimacque, Victoria Berenices (SH 254–258): Éléments de commentaire sur la divinité de Bérénice', *CRIPPEL* 8 (1986), 83–7; E. Livrea, 'P. Oxy. 2463: Lykophron and Callimachus', *CQ* 39 (1989), 141–7; P. A. Rosenmeyer, 'The Unexpected Guests: Patterns of *Xenia* in Callimachus' "Victoria Berenices" and Petronius' *Satyricon*', *CQ* 41 (1991), 403–13.

<sup>2</sup> In *CQ* 42 (1992), 533–8, J. D. Morgan argued convincingly that Molorcus is properly spelled without an 'h' according to the papyrological evidence, and I have adopted his view in this paper.

ravages of the Nemean lion have left the land deserted and the farmers miserable with fear; no living creature dares to venture outside, and daily chores (e.g. wood-gathering, pasturing the animals) remain undone (257.21–8):

αἰνολέων ἀπόλοιτο εἰ  
καὶ θεὸς ἡ καίνει[ ]....[.]...μ.[  
ὄφρα κέπιω.[ ] ὦ σε πάλιν πυρὶ δι[ε]ῖπνον  
]μενον δουρῇ μηδὲ σὺν ἀξυλῇ  
...]α νυν, δρεπάνου γὰρ ἀπευθέα τέρχν[ε]α [  
...]α πολύσκαρθμος τοῦτον ἔχειν[...].[  
...].ε καὶ λίππουσα δακεῖν κυτίσσιοι [χίμαιρα  
βληχ]άζει πυλέων ἐντὸς ἐεργομένη  
may that dreadful lion perish ...  
and the god [grant that] you either kill [it]...  
so that once again ...[we may have] fuel for the fire  
...and not with wretched lack of wood  
...[as] now, for the young trees are ignorant of the pruning knife...  
...much-leaping...  
...and the she-goat, although eager to bite at the clover,  
bleats, shut up inside the gates.

After this vivid picture of desolation, the passage ends with fragmentary references to Argos and Hera. The scholia (258) add further information, suggesting that the farmyard animals, jumping in frustration at being locked up, anticipate the speeding horses of the games yet to come. Meanwhile, as the two men are talking, evening has fallen, and the next section depicts a rustic dinner. Molorcus' wife or maid appears to be preparing food,<sup>3</sup> using a two-pronged fork to reach provisions stored under the rafters and dividing a portion for (presumably) their guest (259.1–4):

]νια[  
δίκρον φητρὸν ἀειραμένη  
].λελα[...].ι στέγος οὐδ' ὅσον εἰ[  
]παιδὶ νέμουσα μέρος.  
...  
lifting a double-pronged fork  
...the roof...  
...distributing a portion to the child [i.e. of Alcmena]...

The poet sets the scene for hospitality with a conventional time-reference using agricultural imagery: 'and when the evening star that rises at the setting of the sun began to loosen the yokes from the oxen...' (259.5–6).<sup>4</sup> In the midst of this peaceful meal, Molorcus suddenly hears a noise; on edge because of the lion's threatening presence, he suspects the worst: 'just as when a timid deer hears the roar of a lion cub in its ears' (259.10–11). But the intruders turn out to be mice, and the farmer curses them for having invaded his house: 'annoying beasts... some god invented you as a harassment to hosts' (259.12–14). They appear to be frequent visitors, and we are entertained with a catalogue of their misdeeds.<sup>5</sup> Molorcus decides to take direct action, and the poet narrates in great detail the invention of the world's first mousetraps, complete with poisonous hellebore hidden in appetizing flour as bait

<sup>3</sup> The quick succession of lifting down and distributing the food argues against the possibility of building a fire, cooking, or other elaborate preparations for the meal.

<sup>4</sup> There is a typical Callimachean twist to this conventional phrase: Molorcus has already told us that because of the lion's violence, he is incapable of doing any work at all around the farm. The norm of unyoking oxen at dusk after a productive day's work highlights the unusual circumstances at Cleonae.

<sup>5</sup> This section is particularly reminiscent of Athene's complaints about the mice in the pseudo-Homeric *Batrachomyomachia*. See R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1949–53), i.149.

(259.15–33). This humorous aetiology ends with an uncertain reference to the opening of a door, and the place name Cleonae (259.34–7).

We pass from the mousetraps to a continuation of the conversation between the two men, presumably still on the same night. Heracles politely addresses his host and reassures him that the lion will be killed, and that the hero himself will return unharmed. Parsons<sup>6</sup> paraphrases Heracles' words in the segment that follows: 'If once I lay hands on the lion, you, Molorcus, will soon have plenty of cattle ... I shall give proof that Zeus does indeed father children (and I am one of them) ... but if I fall under the lion's teeth ... sacrifice the beast to me' (260A.7–13).

At this point, with the option of two different endings for the story, the text is reduced to scraps. We may assume that Heracles sets out in the morning to track the lion; Athene joins him, crowns his success with a parsley wreath, and he returns to Molorcus' farm. The number of missing lines is probably not large: in a manner familiar from the *Hecale*, Callimachus spends more time describing the rustic entertainment than the heroic *agon* itself. The text resumes in mid-dialogue, as Heracles reveals to Molorcus the full impact of the lion hunt and the future of the Nemean Games. As they anticipate feasting on the ram that has been slaughtered for the occasion, Heracles promises to tell Molorcus all that Athene has prophesied while assisting him in his labours (264.1–5). After a gap of 14–16 lines, Heracles states that thereafter, contestants in the Nemean Games will be crowned with parsley wreaths instead of the traditional pine (265.1–9). Heracles then finishes eating, satisfying his heroic appetite, remains overnight on the farm, and returns in the morning to Argos (265.16–18). The extant text ends with an aetiological summation: 'and never yet have the ritual services stopped' (265.21), referring to the continuous enactment of the Nemean Games since that time.

The sequence of events in Molorcus' reception of Heracles remains open to debate. A. S. Hollis suggests a slightly different ordering of the papyri fragments than that presented above.<sup>7</sup> He argues against placing the interruptive action of the setting of the mousetraps (259) in the midst of two separate conversations between Heracles and Molorcus (257, 260). Hollis proposes (along with T. Gelzer) that *S.H.* 259, which he interprets as having no reference to Heracles, should be placed before 256–7, the initial conversation between Heracles and Molorcus on the evening of the hero's arrival. This effectively eliminates Heracles from any part in the domestic crisis, as Molorcus will have encountered the mice (and finished his supper?) before Heracles ever enters on the scene. Hollis calls on Ovid (*Fasti* 5.497ff.: Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury at the hut of Hyrieus) as evidence that guests usually arrive later in the evening, as dusk falls. But it is equally likely that dusk may find the guest already engaged in pleasant conversation with his host as the meal is prepared (e.g. Ovid, *Met.* 8.651–2: Jupiter and Mercury at the hut of Philemon and Baucis), and, if we accept the order of the fragments in the *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, we can imagine a smooth transition from Heracles questioning his host outside about the sad condition of the countryside at 257, to his entrance into the house with his host at the beginning of 259. Putting aside the vexed papyrological evidence, there are two other reasons to have Heracles present at this juncture. First, his presence would give added resonance to the word ξένος, ambiguous in Greek, as Molorcus complains that the mice have come as a curse to ξείνοις (259.14); obviously they bother the host, but the

<sup>6</sup> P. Parsons (1977), p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> A. S. Hollis (1986), pp. 470–1. His interpretation has been challenged on papyrological grounds by E. Livrea (1989), pp. 141–7, who would keep the sequence reconstructed by Lloyd-Jones and Parsons.

situation becomes critical only if your guest is as honourable (and notoriously gluttonous) as the hero Heracles. Second, and along similar lines, the effect of the lack of fuel for the fire to cook a decent meal is much less devastating if it involves only Molorcus and his small household. The humour of the story is precisely in an accumulation of embarrassments for poor Molorcus: he has no firewood, and must therefore shamefacedly offer his guest a cold meal; to add insult to injury, the mice interrupt them just as they sit down to eat.

### III. HERACLES' RECEPTION

Whether the character of Molorcus was invented or appropriated from another context,<sup>8</sup> Callimachus appears to have intended the episode as a picturesque novelty to counterbalance the familiar Nemean lion hunt. The shift of the narrative away from the *arete* of Heracles and on to the mundane tasks of the farmer Molorcus is quintessentially Callimachean. The author creates antagonists out of a peasant and his mice instead of a hero and a lion, and trades the *action* of the Nemean Games for the *action* of a mousetrap.

Most critics interpret the interaction between Molorcus and Heracles as a typical example of *xenia* or *theoxenia*, the reception of a hero or god in the home of a humble countryman.<sup>9</sup> The two examples commonly invoked to explain this passage are Callimachus' *Hecale* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 8.626ff., the 'Philemon and Baucis' episode. A consideration of these parallel situations, one created slightly earlier<sup>10</sup> and the other substantially later in time, will reveal how Molorcus' reception of Heracles functions as a *topos* yet at the same time challenges certain aspects of that literary tradition.

Fragments 27–39 Hollis (cf. 239ff. Pfeiffer and *S.H.* 282–4) of the *Hecale* describe Theseus' arrival, on his way to capture the Marathonian bull, at the cottage of an old woman, and the meal with which she receives him. There are numerous similarities between the two Callimachean hospitality scenes.<sup>11</sup> In each an impoverished host receives an heroic guest on his way to conquer a dangerous wild beast, and offers him rustic fare and shelter for the night. Both hosts appear to promise to sacrifice on behalf of the heroes' success, and their hospitality is rewarded and immortalized by the institution of a cult.<sup>12</sup> Of greatest interest for our current purposes is the description of the meal itself, lovingly elaborated in the *Hecale*. After Theseus has

<sup>8</sup> J. D. Morgan (n. 2 above) suggests that the character Molorcus was not invented out of whole cloth by Callimachus, as Parsons (1977), p. 43 and Thomas (1983), p. 94 assume *ex silentio*, but unearthed from an earlier tradition, e.g. a local history of the Argolid.

<sup>9</sup> e.g. P. Parsons (1977), pp. 43–4. For a more general discussion of the hospitality theme, see D. Flückiger-Guggenheim, *Göttliche Gäste: die Einkehr von Göttern und Heroen in der griechischen Mythologie* (Bern, 1984); G. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge, 1987); and A. S. Hollis, *Callimachus Hecale* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 341–54 (= appendix III: The Hospitality Theme). For references to the *Hecale* in what follows, I have adopted the text and numbering system of Hollis's 1990 edition.

<sup>10</sup> A. S. Hollis (1990), p. 344.

<sup>11</sup> A. S. Hollis (1990), pp. 344–5, idem, 'Callimachus fr. 535 Pf.: Another Piece of Hecale?', *ZPE* 86 (1991), 14–16.

<sup>12</sup> A. S. Hollis (1990), p. 344 notes 26 and 27. It is curious (but not surprising given the fragmentary nature of the material) that the evidence for the promised sacrifice of Hecale comes only from Plutarch (*Thes.* 14.3), who claims the Atthidographer Philochorus as his source, and the 'reprieved sacrifice' of Molorcus is documented solely by 'Probus' (on Vergil, *Georgics* 3.19), on which see more below. The only mention of a sacrifice in the surviving Callimachean texts is Molorcus' frustrated wish that he could offer Heracles a hot meal (257.23), and Heracles' later suggestion that the farmer should sacrifice to his shade if he does not return (260A.7–13).

been seated, Hecale brings down firewood stored in the rafters to dry (31–2), boils some water in a pot, presumably with which to wash her guest's feet (33–4), and sets out a generous amount of bread, fresh and pickled olives, and vegetables (35–9).<sup>13</sup> Although the fragmentary state of the evidence prohibits us from asserting anything too strongly, it seems unlikely that the *Hecale* contained the motif of a 'rejected' or 'reprieved sacrifice' which crops up later in Ovid's comparable scene at the hut of Philemon and Baucis. The meal at Hecale's house appears to have been solely a vegetarian one, although she did have the means (fire and animals) with which to sacrifice, had she wished to do so at the time, or had she lived long enough after Theseus' departure to fulfil her vow.<sup>14</sup>

Ovid's paradigm of hospitality, however, does include a reprieved sacrifice, and, since Ovid may have used both the Molorcus and the Hecale stories as inspiration, in studying the later version, we gain yet another perspective on the fragmentary Callimachean texts. The parallels between the scenes in the Molorcus episode and the *Metamorphoses* are striking, long since noted by Pfeiffer,<sup>15</sup> but they are by no means complete. In fact, their similarity has led scholars to confuse a crucial issue in the reception of Heracles which will be the focus of the rest of this paper.

In Ovid's version, Jupiter and Mercury wander into the rustic home of an aged couple, Philemon and Baucis. The pair scurry to prepare a feast for the unknown visitors, offering wine and fresh vegetables as well as dried meat; the gods refuse to accept the sacrifice of their only goose. In preparing the fire, Baucis uses the coals from the day before which are still burning, feeding the fire with twigs and split wood as she places over it a pot of water for boiling the meat (*Met.* 8.640–50). The hearth fire, an integral part of traditional hospitality, is elaborately described. Meanwhile, Philemon uses a large fork to lift down the meat stored under the roof (*Met.* 8.647–50):

furca levat ille bicorni  
sordida terga suis nigro pendentia tigno  
servatoque diu resecat de tergo partem  
exiguam sectamque domat ferventibus undis.

With a double-pronged fork he lifted down  
pieces of smoked pork, hanging from the sooty beam,  
and he cut off a small portion of the meat he had stored so long  
and placed it in the boiling water to cook.

E. Livrea<sup>16</sup> cites the above story as a clear imitation of Callimachus' text at *S.H.* 259. He assumes that the unnamed woman is using an identical large, double-pronged fork (259.2: δίκρον φητρὸν) to reach for pieces of smoked meat hanging from the rafters, where it would be best protected from mice; a generous meal is presumed to follow, complete with the boiled meat and whatever else the small farm has to offer. While the similarity of terminology for the fork is undeniable and suggests direct influence of the Greek poet on Ovid, I will argue against the more pervasive influence of conventional *xenia* in the Callimachean passage. Molorcus would wish to entertain Heracles generously if he could, but his circumstances do not permit it. Livrea also suggests that this reception for Heracles on the night before the lion hunt had been

<sup>13</sup> We may also wish to consider several uncertain fragments in the context of Hecale's reception of Theseus, e.g. fr. 114 with reference to Hecale's fire, and fr. 156 (perhaps also 157) with reference to the vegetables served; for further discussion, see Hollis's (1990) commentary ad loc., pp. 299–300 and 319.

<sup>14</sup> The vegetarian nature of her food seems to be supported by Nonnus' allusion to a line in the *Hecale* in the context of Dionysus' non-meat meal at the home of Brongos (*Dion.* 17.55). See n. 20 below. <sup>15</sup> R. Pfeiffer (1949–53), i.146. <sup>16</sup> E. Livrea (1979), pp. 38–9.

hinted at already in *S.H.* 257, when Molorcus wished aloud that he had fuel for the fire (257.23: *πυρὶ δεῖπνον*) with which to feed his guest. But this is to ignore the logic of the fragments.

In the meeting with Molorcus before the lion hunt, no evidence has survived of any references to cooking or meat. Quite to the contrary, Molorcus complains (257.23–5) that because of the threat of the lion, he has no wood (257.24: *σὺν ἀξυλίῃ*) and therefore cannot build a fire; he has probably been in this state of deprivation for some time.<sup>17</sup> The entire countryside is under siege, its inhabitants too terrified even to collect kindling from pruned tree branches or to pasture the animals. 'Theocritus' offers corroborating evidence for this state of affairs in *Idyll* 25.216–20, where Heracles tells his version of the lion hunt:

ἡματος ἦν τὸ μεσηγύ, καὶ οὐδέπω ἵχνια τοῖο  
φρασθῆναι δυνάμην οὐδ' ὠρυθμοῖο πυθέσθαι.  
οὐδὲ μὲν ἀνθρώπων τις ἔην ἐπὶ βουσί καὶ ἔργοις  
φαινόμενος σπορίμοιο δι' αὔλακος ὄντιν' ἐροίμην,  
ἀλλὰ κατὰ σταθμοὺς χλωρόν δέος εἶχεν ἕκαστον.

it was midday, and I had not yet been able  
to trace his prints or hear his roar;  
nor was there anyone visible, busy with the cows or with work  
in that rich farmland, whom I might question,  
for pale fear kept them all inside their homes.

Molorcus is clearly embarrassed by his inability to provide his guest with the conventional warm welcome. According to the customs of *xenia*, Molorcus should offer one of his flock to Heracles, who may or may not choose to accept it. But there would be no real sense in offering to slaughter an animal if there were no means by which to cook it. Clearly, Molorcus must wait for the restoration of order before fulfilling his duty as host. He expresses the hope that Heracles, with the help of the gods, will soon eliminate the problem by removing the lion (257.20–2). But the scene in the hut when Molorcus' wife or maid reaches for food and divides it into portions occurs that same night, when they are still unable to light a fire for food or sacrifice.

When Molorcus wishes for 'fuel for the fire' he is looking to the future, after the death of the lion. The hope for a normal meal is satisfied much later, not by the makeshift, cold meal which Heracles receives in an atmosphere of tension and fear, but towards the end of the poem, when Molorcus slays a ram to prepare a real feast for the hero, one at which Heracles can satisfy his legendary appetite (265.17: *θυμὸν ἀρεσάμενος*). The first offer of hospitality and the final celebratory feast are clearly differentiated in the text itself. At 257.23–4, Molorcus wishes to have 'fuel for the fire again...not with dreadful lack of wood...[as] now'. The 'now' includes the first night, *S.H.* 259, as evening falls on their first meeting. The second meeting is also defined by a reference to evening, as Heracles stays overnight after the kill before returning to Argos (265). At 264, Heracles has just returned from his encounter with the lion, and appears to defer a full report of the events until the feast is ready (264.3–4):

ἄττα γέρον, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πα[ρὼν ἐν δ]ιαιτὶ μαθήσει,  
νῦν δὲ τά μοι πεύσῃ Παιλλὰ[s...]. . [

but old man, these things (i.e. how I killed the lion) you will  
learn while present at the feast,  
but now you will learn what Pallas [said] to me (i.e. about the  
future of the Nemean Games).

<sup>17</sup> P. Parsons (1977), pp. 19–20 offers further evidence from the scholia (258), tentatively reading 'the peasants could not gather wood, because of the lion'.

But if we accept the above argument, that Molorcus is unable to cook for his guest at their first meeting, how do we explain the action in 259 of reaching for and dividing up portions?<sup>18</sup> The phrase *νέμουσα μέρος* (259.4) is technical for animal sacrifice and the distribution of meat for human consumption. I would argue that Callimachus plays here with the reader's expectations of *xenia* and the contrasting harsh reality of gluttonous Heracles making do with rustic fare, perhaps cheeses, fruits, or grains stored hanging from the rafters to elude the mice.<sup>19</sup> The incongruous diction matches the incongruity of the situation. This interpretation is supported by Nonnus in his *Dionysiaca*. The story of Dionysus' rustic reception by the shepherd Brongos includes a reference to the similar situations of Heracles and Molorcus (*Dion.* 17.51–4):<sup>20</sup>

τεύχων δειπνον ἀδειπνον ἀδαιτρεύτοιο τραπέζης,  
οἷα Κλεωναίου φατίζεται ἀμφὶ Μολόρκου  
κεῖνα, τὰ περ σπύδοντι λεοντοφόνους ἐς ἀγῶνας  
ῶπλισεν Ἡρακλῆι...

so he served a meal that was no meal, a table without meat,  
such as they say in Cleonae Molorcus provided  
for Heracles once, as he was on his way  
to fight the lion...

Nonnus stresses the lack of meat: Dionysus forbids the shepherd to slay his sheep, and enjoys instead the rustic banquet of a 'bloodless table' (17.62). Heracles, in contrast, may not necessarily request or enjoy such a frugal meal, but he has no choice.

There is one other piece of ancient evidence that recounts the story of Heracles and Molorcus with direct reference to Callimachus. In a scholion to Vergil ('Probus' on Vergil, *Georgics* 3.19),<sup>21</sup> we read that Molorcus offers to sacrifice his only ram to feed Heracles on their first meeting, although the hero then postpones the sacrifice until after the lion's death.

Molorchus fuit Herculis hospes, apud quem is diversatus est, cum proficisceretur ad leonem Nemeum necandum. qui cum immolaturus esset unicum arietem, quem habebat, ut Herculem liberalius acciperet, impetravit ab eo Hercules, ut eum servaret...

Molorcus was the host of Heracles, at whose home he stopped while on his way to kill the Nemean lion...and when he was about to slaughter the only ram that he owned in order to entertain Heracles more generously, Heracles asked him to keep it alive...

The conditions recorded by 'Probus' concerning the sacrifice are similar to those found in the Callimachean version (260A.7–13): if Heracles succeeds, the ram will provide a feast for the two men, but if he fails, then Molorcus should burn it in honour of his shade. But Callimachus does not, to the best of our knowledge, connect these conditions to a reprieved sacrifice at their first meeting; instead, he shows Heracles comforting the farmer, claiming that he will do all he can to kill the lion and bring about a return to normality, including the long-awaited sacrifice and feast. In addition, according to the accepted ordering of the fragments, this particular conversation between Heracles and Molorcus (260) occurs after they have begun to

<sup>18</sup> On the following, see also P. A. Rosenmeyer (1991), pp. 403–13.

<sup>19</sup> Ariston, *AP* 6.303, speaks of mice nibbling on cheese and raisins.

<sup>20</sup> Scholars have noted that while Nonnus refers explicitly here to Callimachus' Molorcus episode, he also alludes one line later to the description of the rustic meal in the *Hecale*. Compare *Dion.* 17.55: *εἰν ἀλὶ νηχομένης φθινοπωρίδος ἄνθος ἐλαίης* with *Hec.* 36.5: *εἰν ἀλὶ νήχεσθαι φθινοπωρίδα*. Hollis (1990), p. 344 n. 24, states that 'the fact that *Dion.* 17.55 seems to echo *Hec.* fr. 36.5 may merely indicate that the two models (Molorcus and *Hecale*) were very close to each other'. See also R. Thomas (1983), p. 104 n. 68.

<sup>21</sup> Servius, ed. Thilo-Hagen, III.ii.376.

dine together (259). Rather than functioning as a reprieved sacrifice, the ram in question appears to represent a vow or dedication for a safe return, not unlike Hecale's intended offering on behalf of Theseus; it is to be offered in thanksgiving or in mourning, depending on the outcome of Heracles' adventure.

Precisely because the reprieved sacrifice is so conventional, 'Probus' may have automatically expected the *topos* to conform to similar stories of *theoxenia*, perhaps even recalling the passage in Ovid, which itself may have been a conflation of several *xenia* themes. He emphasizes that Molorcus offered to slaughter his prized animal for the hero, but omits the Callimachean detail that Molorcus, under the circumstances, was still unable to cook the ram, a necessary step before serving it for dinner. As I see it, there are three possible interpretations of the story: (a) Molorcus followed the standard practice of *xenia* in offering the hero one of his flock for dinner; (b) Molorcus wished to offer Heracles a meal of mutton at their first meeting but admitted at the same time that he was unable to perform the proper rites without 'fuel for the fire', or (c) the offer of the ram was never part of a reprieved sacrifice for that first dinner, but depended entirely on Heracles' prior killing of the lion before the farmer could gather firewood for cooking.

Of these three interpretations, only (b) fits the specific contexts of both Callimachus and 'Probus'. A further argument for (b) may be hidden in the very slight differences in the texts of two mythographers who report the Molorcus episode without naming Callimachus as a source.<sup>22</sup> Pediasimus (1.2-4) states that Heracles intervened as Molorcus was *about* to make a sacrifice (*θύειν Δὲ μέλλοντι*), while Apollodorus (2.5.1) claims that Heracles intervened as Molorcus *wished* to make a sacrifice (*θύειν ἱερεῖον θέλοντι*). If Molorcus stated that he wished he could sacrifice to prepare some meat for his guest, but was temporarily unable to do so because of the lack of firewood, then Heracles would have had the perfect opportunity to suggest the solution of deferral. This offer does not have to occur before (and with direct reference to) their first meal; in fact, the parallel scene in Ovid supports a postponement, as Philemon and Baucis offer to kill their goose only after an abundance of other food has already been served, and after the divinity of their guests has been suspected (*Met.* 8.679-88).<sup>23</sup> The solution I would put forward is thus a compromise between the combined weight of Ovid and 'Probus', who suggest the pattern of a reprieved sacrifice, and the explicit statements of Callimachus, which prohibit any act of cooking or sacrificing before Heracles' slaughter of the marauding lion. Callimachus, not surprisingly, uses the reception of Heracles by Molorcus to play both within and against the convention of *xenia*.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The argument of this paper, then, is that we must differentiate between three distinct stages of Heracles' reception by Molorcus: first, the original scene of hospitality, a necessarily cold and meatless meal; second, an impossible wish on the part of Molorcus that he could entertain Heracles with something more substantial, and the hero's polite but practical suggestion that the ram be kept alive to serve as a thanks offering for his safe return; and third, the final joyous celebration of restored order. At the first meeting, Callimachus offers us the humour of an unconventional *xenia*: hungry Heracles must make do with rustic, vegetarian rations, while Molorcus is

<sup>22</sup> *Myth. Gr.*, ed. Wagner, i.72 and 250.

<sup>23</sup> On other details of this scene, see M.-K. Gamel, 'Baucis and Philemon: Paradigm or Paradox?', *Helios* 11 (1984), 117-31.

mortified by his role as unprepared host. On top of that, when the farmer offers the hero his meagre fare, he discovers that the mice have invaded the larder, further depleting his resources. It is not until Heracles returns victorious that he finally receives the warm welcome he deserves, and can enjoy a feast of cooked meat with its accompanying festivities.<sup>24</sup>

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