



Callimachus: Aetia, Iambi, Hecale and Other Fragments.; Musaeus: Hero and Leander (Loeb Classical Library No. 421)

By Callimachus, Musaeus

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Callimachus of Cyrene, born ca. 310 BCE, after studying philosophy at Athens, became a teacher of grammar and poetry at Alexandria. Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (reigned 285–247) made him when still young a librarian in the new library at Alexandria; he prepared a great catalogue of its books.

Callimachus was author of much poetry and many works in prose, but not much survives. His hymns and epigrams are given with works by Aratus and Lycophron in another volume (*no. 129*) of the Loeb Classical Library. In the present volume are included fragments of the *Aetia* (Causes), aetiological legends concerning Greek history and customs; fragments of a book of *Iambi*; 147 fragments of the epic poem *Hecale*, which described Theseus's victory over the bull which infested Marathon; and other fragments.

We have no explicit information about the poet Musaeus, author of the short epic poem on *Hero and Leander*, except that he is given in some manuscripts the title *Grammatikos*, a teacher learned in the rhetoric, poetry and philosophy of his time. He was obviously a follower of the Egyptian poet Nonnus of Panopolis, of the fifth century AD, and his poem seems also to presuppose the *Paraphrase of the Psalms* of Pseudo-Apollinarius which can be dated to the period 460–470.

Musaeus takes up a subject whose first detailed treatment is preserved in Ovid's *Heroides* (Epistles 18 and 19), but he presents it in a quite different manner. Among the literary antecedents to which this learned *grammatikos* expressly alludes, the most prominent are Books 5 and 6 of the *Odyssey* and Plato's *Phaedrus*. He draws too on the *Hymns* of Proclus and the *Metaphrasis of the Gospel of St. John* by Nonnus. He was most probably a Christian Neoplatonist writing a Christian allegory.

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