Aelianus N.A. 14.6: Σῶσας βίωσαν οὔτως, καὶ Εὐριπίδης τὸ ἄπρόσωπον οὖν ὅταν ποιοῦν πλΗγην ἢ τε δύσον ὁμοίος ἢ σωσίς σφόν βάρος ἢ τὴν ἄμοιρον λύγα, δύσοτον δάκος.

Aelianus’ Euripidean fragment (863 Nauck) quoted above has yet to be assigned conclusively to a specific play. Augusto Mancini tentatively ascribed these lines to the satyric Syleus, suggesting that they were the chorus’ announcement of Syleus’ return from hunting. Mancini compared the fragment with Silenus’ warning of Polyphemus’ entrance in the Cyclops (193). Although I shall argue that Fr. 863 N. is indeed satyric, the evidence to assign it to the Syleus is far from convincing. The focus of these lines is not upon the terrifying entrance of an ogre, like Syleus or Polyphemus, but wonder at the unusual beast being carried by someone coming on stage. I would suggest that this passage is a description of Heracles, carrying the monstrous Cerberus out of the Underworld in Euripides’ satyr play, Eurystheus. Such a description would not only be appropriate to the plot of the Eurystheus, but would conform with a common motif in satyr drama, the “rising form” or “fieldmouse”.

Even from the meager remains of satyr drama that we possess it is clear that the satyr playwrights were very fond of causing beings to emerge suddenly onto the stage, thereby eliciting fear and wonder on the part of the satyr chorus. The prototype of these “fieldmouse” scenes is found in Aeschylus’ treatment of Sisyphus. Aeschylus wrote at least one satyr play in which the wily rogue escapes from Hades through trickery. On either one or two occasions a speaker, probably one of the satyrs, sees Sisyphus emerging from Hades and wonders at the strange sight. Is it “a giant fieldmouse” or an “Aetnaian beetle”?


2) Several scholars have commented on this motif. See Ernst Buschor, Feldmäuse, SB München 1 (1937) 1–34; Peter Guggisberg, Das Satyrspiel (Zürich, 1947), pp. 72–74; Irmgard Fischer, Typische Motive im Satyrspiel (Göttingen, 1958), pp. 53–59; Robert Ussher, The Other Aeschylus, Maia 29–30 (1977–78) 18–19.

3) Three titles were given in antiquity for Aeschylus’ Sisyphus play(s), Sisyphus, Sisyphus Drapetes, and Sisyphus Petrocylistes. Although most scholars have assumed that these all refer to a single drama, Sutton (note 1 above), pp. 27–28, has argued convincingly that there were two Sisyphus plays. For the opposing viewpoint see, e.g., Victor Steffen, Studia satyrica I (Posen, 1934), pp. 4–5.
The Euripidean fragment quoted by Aelianus is remarkably similar to the “fieldmouse” passages cited above. The Eurystheus, which dramatized Heracles’ abduction of Cerberus, would have been the most likely of the Euripidean satyr plays to have contained such a scene (4). A variation upon the sudden appearance of an unknown being is found in Aeschylus’ satyr Dictyulci, which dramatized Dictys’ rescue of Danae from their chest floating off the shore of Seriphos. As he hauls up the chest in his net, he suspects that he has caught some type of sea monster (5):

\[ \text{fr. 46a, 8–9 Radt} \]

\[ \text{tì φώ τόδ’ εἶναι; πότερα . [} \]
\[ \text{φάλαιναν ἦ ζύγαιαν ἦ x.] } \]

The Euripidean fragment quoted by Aelianus is remarkably similar to the “fieldmouse” passages cited above. The Eurystheus, which dramatized Heracles’ abduction of Cerberus, would have been the most likely of the Euripidean satyr plays to have contained such a scene (4). What little we know of these “fieldmouse” fragments suggests that the audience would have expected such an epiphany, as Heracles emerged from Hades with Cerberus on his back.

I suggest that the setting for fragment 863 N. is as follows. The speaker, probably Silenus or one of the satyrs, sees a man, Heracles, at a distance carrying a beast, Cerberus, that defies description. It is a terrifying and curious creature that looks somewhat like a boar or a misshapen lynx. Though we might ask why the speaker does not describe Heracles’ burden simply as a vicious dog, we should remember that Cerberus was portrayed in art and literature in a variety of monstrous forms (6). Moreover, we should expect the satyrs to give a confused and enigmatic description, comically concealing the true nature of the beast that frightens them.

Although we cannot be sure that fr. 863 N. does refer to Heracles and Cerberus, the description it provides is very appropriate to them. Moreover, the “fieldmouse” motif that the fragment evidently represents would have been expected of the Eurystheus alone of the nine satyr plays that Euripides authored.

4) See Jane Harrison, Sophocles’ Ichneutae Col. IX. 1–7 and the δρώμενον of Kyllene and the Satyrs, in Essays and Studies Presented to William Ridgeway (Cambridge, 1913), pp. 136–52, who gives an explanation of how “fieldmouse” scenes would have been staged in the Ichneutae and other plays. See also Fischer (note 2 above), p. 55; Ussher, Sophocles’ Ichneutae as a Satyr-Play, Hermathena 118 (1974) 134–35.


6) Text is from Stefan Radt, ed., Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta 3 (Göttingen, 1985), p. 163. Radt cites various suggestions for supplementing the text in his apparatus.

7) For the titles and plots of the Euripidean satyr plays, including Eurystheus, see Victor Steffen, The Satyr-Dramas of Euripides, Eos 59 (1971) 203–26; Sutton (note 1 above), pp. 59–94. Steffen (p. 220) notes that “Cerberus brought to earth by Heracles must have produced fear as well as mirth among the satyrs. . . .”

8) On the various representations of Cerberus in art and literature, see the articles s.v. “Kerberos” in RE 21 (1921) 271–75 and Roscher’s Lexikon 2 (1890–94) 1119–35.
Given these two important points, the *Eurystheus* certainly seems to be the most likely source of fr. 863 N.\(^9\).

9) I am grateful to the Editor for helpful suggestions.

**OVIDIUS IMITATOR SUI**

**Fasti** 4.179 ff. and Amores 3.2.43 ff.

Ovid’s treatment of the Megalensia in his *Fasti* (4.179 ff.) opens with the noisy procession of Cybele’s statue through the streets of Rome. The Phrygian pipe blows a fanfare, eunuchs beat their *tympana*, cymbals clash. The stately procession of the Great Mother is accompanied by the howls of her devotees. Against this background our poet invites his fellow citizens to the Ludi Megalenses and sternly urges them to refrain from the “war” in the forum. He then wishes to interview the deity, as he does so many others in the *Fasti*. But the festal din intimidates him, so he asks Cybele for someone else who can answer his aetiological questions. She dispatches her granddaughters, the Muses, conveniently spotted nearby, one of whom, Erato, serves as Ovid’s interlocutor for the remainder of the lengthy entry for April 4.

Thus begins yet another of the *Fasti*’s dialogues between the curious poet-antiquarian and obliging deities which Ovid developed in imitation of Callimachus’ *Aitia*\(^1\). In this instance, as R. J. Littlewood recently observed\(^2\), the fiction of the poet’s presence at a religious festival represents an additional Callimachean dimension. In his dramatic fifth hymn, for example, Callimachus vividly portrays the ritual preparations for a procession by directing the events as an enthusiastic master of ceremonies\(^3\). But it should also be noted that Ovid’s comic encounter with a deity in procession at the Megalensia has a model much closer to home in a scene from one of his own, most successful dramatic elegies.

Before the races commence in Am. 3.2, Ovid and his would-be girl friend witness the customary procession of various deities’ images into the Circus. Ovid’s towering persona completely takes over the event. He announces the *pompa* and issues directions to the audience (3.2.43 ff.: *sed iam pompa venit: linguis animisque favete; . . . plaudite*, etc.), just as his descendant in the *Fasti* more briefly introduces the Ludi Megalenses (4.187–188: *scaena sonat, ludique vocant: spectate, Quirites*).

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3) **Hy.** 5.1–56. See also Hymns 2 and 6. Ovid imitates Callimachus’ fifth *Hymn* in this very book of the *Fasti* (4.133–162); see C. Floratos, Veneralia, Hermes 88 (1960) 208–216.