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# Berenice and her Lock\*

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SUMMARY: Callimachus's "Lock of Berenice," which concludes the *Aetia*, was written for and about Berenice II, the wife of Ptolemy III Euergetes. This poem and Callimachus's "Hymn to Athena" are presented as portraits of the Queen that treat some aspects of her questionable past in a way that is positive, yet nuanced. Material evidence, including a cameo, a mosaic portrait, faience jugs, and documentary papyri shed further light on her public persona.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

NO POEM OF CATULLUS IS BETTER KNOWN OR MORE WIDELY ADMIRER THAN 66, "The Lock of Berenice." Here, in the voice of the Lock herself, the poet tells a tale as bizarre as it is appealing. It begins with Conon, an astronomer and mathematician who lived in Alexandria at the time of the third Ptolemy. It was he, she says, who first saw her, a lock of hair from the Queen's head, shining brightly in the sky. Then, in a flashback, the Lock explains how it happened. Shortly after Berenice's marriage to the King, her husband went off to war. His Queen, in a frenzy of anxiety and despair at his absence, vowed to the gods that she would sacrifice a lock of her hair if her husband returned safely.

\* This paper was originally delivered at the annual meeting of the APA, January 8th, 2011 with the title "Berenice: Lady of the Lock," and has been revised for publication with the addition of footnotes and bibliography. The original presentation was illustrated with images that could not be reproduced here. References to some of these have been deleted, while others have been enhanced with more detailed verbal descriptions. All English translations are my own.

His military adventure was a great success, he came back in triumph, and the Queen fulfilled her vow (Catull. 66.1–38).<sup>1</sup>

The lock was dedicated at the Temple of Arsinoe-Zephyritis, and promptly disappeared. Even as she tells the tale, the Lock is beside herself with grief. She bemoans her absence from Berenice's beloved head and melodramatically recounts the trauma of being swept from the temple by Zephyr into the sea and then up to the sky among the other constellations (Catull. 66.39–68). But the Lock is not yet resigned to her fate. She especially misses the unguents that Berenice applied to her hair when she was young, and asks that the queen and other chaste, married women pour libations of perfume to her before spending the night with their like-minded husbands (Catull. 66.75–88).

Though Catullus's poem is a fantasy, the constellation Coma Berenices is quite real, and about 300 million light years away.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Queen, it is a rather dim cluster of stars. Only one is bright enough to have a name and it is called, appropriately, "Diadem," the headband worn by Alexander the Great and his successors to indicate their royal status.<sup>3</sup>

Not only is the constellation real, but so was Berenice, the wife of the third Ptolemy, Ptolemy Euergetes, King and Pharaoh of Egypt from 246 to 222/1 B.C.E. Her image appears on coins with her name on the reverse, surrounding important elements of her iconography: the single cornucopia filled with fruits and grain, the stars of the Dioscuri, and the fillets of her royal diadem.<sup>4</sup> The coin portraits range from the young and generically beautiful to the stout and jowly, and it is possible that none of them are actual likenesses. Nonetheless, they bring us as close as we will ever come to a visual encounter with the historical Berenice.

It was her compatriot and contemporary, Callimachus of Cyrene, who wrote the original "Lock" that Catullus translated into Latin and coopted for his own literary agenda.<sup>5</sup> Though Catullus's poem has come down to us complete, with a few small corruptions in the text, Callimachus's was almost

<sup>1</sup> The Latin text used throughout is Fordyce 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Links to images of the constellation taken by NASA's Hubble telescope and information about it can be found here: <http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2008/24/fastfacts/>.

<sup>3</sup> On the diadem of Alexander, see Smith 1988: 34–38, and on Berenice's diadems, Daszewski 1985: 149.

<sup>4</sup> Examples are nos. 307 and 313, Mørkholm 1991.

<sup>5</sup> On the role of Callimachus's "Lock" in Catullus's poetry book, see Höschel 2009 with earlier bibliography.

entirely lost except for a few fragments first collected by Angelo Poliziano in his *Miscellaneorum centuria secunda* of 1489. Nothing more of it was known until 1929, when the first of several papyrus discoveries made it possible to restore some of the Greek text.<sup>6</sup> The evidence suggests that there were probably two Greek editions of the poem, and it is generally believed that the second, which concluded the fourth book of Callimachus's *Aetia*, is the version that Catullus knew. This is the hypothesis of Rudolf Pfeiffer, and there is more on this below.<sup>7</sup> We now have roughly a third of the Greek text that Catullus translated into 94 Latin verses. It is not a literal translation at every point, though it is certainly a brilliant one, and where the Greek is missing altogether, Catullus is an indispensable guide to the general contents. Since the discussion below is focused on Berenice, rather than the poem, the Greek text will be privileged, where it is usable, and Catullus will be used to fill in the gaps. The first consequence of this is that the Lock will undergo a sex-change and become Callimachus's masculine *πλόκαμος*, rather than Catullus's feminine *coma*.

## 2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Though the poem is a fantasy, it is set firmly in a historical context since its plot is predicated on the safe return of Berenice's husband, Ptolemy III, from the Third Syrian War. This occurred in 245 B.C.E., when the king was forced to return to Egypt to deal with a local uprising after only one year in the field. There is no record of the kind of send-off and homecoming he received, but one notable feature of the poem is its strong emotional coloring. Not only is the Lock himself overwrought, but he describes the Queen as "distraught" at the time of her husband's departure, with a "mind in turmoil." Sad words were spoken, and Berenice wept (Catull. 66.21–30). This behavior, the Lock says, contrasted with the character of the Queen in her youth (Catull. 66.25–28):

at <te> ego certe  
cognoram a parua uirgine magnanimam.  
anne bonum oblita es facinus, quo regium adepta es  
coniugium, quod non fortior ausit alis?

<sup>6</sup> The first of the new fragments was PSI 1092, also published in Vitelli 1929. The source of the others is *P.Oxy.* 2258, edited by Lobel in 1952. Pfeiffer 1949–53 made use of the papyrus even before its publication: see the text of the "Coma" in vol. 1, fr. 110, and *addenda and corrigenda* in 2.114–16. Recent editions of the Greek text can be found in Marinone 1997, D'Alessio 2007, and Massimilla 2010, all with Italian commentary.

<sup>7</sup> Pfeiffer 1949–53: 2.xxxiii–xxxviii.

But certainly I knew you to be bold from the time you were a small girl. Or have you forgotten the noble act by which you acquired a royal marriage, which no stronger person dared?

That “noble act” or “noble crime”—both possibilities are contained in *facinus*—is universally understood to be the assassination of Demetrius “the Fair,” who was Berenice’s fiancé or, more likely, her first husband. The story is told in Justin’s *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus* (26.3.2–8). Her father, Magas, the self-styled King of Cyrene, had arranged a marriage for her with the future Ptolemy III, but died before the wedding could take place, and Berenice’s mother made other plans for her daughter. She aimed to keep Cyrene out of the orbit of the Ptolemies by marrying her to another of the successor families. Her choice was Demetrius, half-brother of the Macedonian King Antigonus Gonatas. He was not popular with the people, but Berenice’s mother fell under his spell, or he hers, and they began an affair that was ended when soldiers broke into the Queen’s bedroom and killed him *in flagrante delicto*, while Berenice looked on and protected her mother. It would be hard to credit this, since Justin’s *Epitome* is not known for its objective reporting, but Catullus’s allusion to the episode most likely translates one in Callimachus’s original, and Callimachus of Cyrene would know something about the situation there before Berenice’s arrival in Alexandria.

Murdering family to gain or consolidate personal power was *de rigueur* in the Macedonian monarchy and the successor kingdoms, so it is likely that there is a kernel of truth in the story: that Demetrius met an untimely end, and that Berenice was somehow implicated in the plot. Her behavior might have given pause to a lesser man, but Ptolemy III greeted the news by making wedding plans. He wanted the wealth, ships, grain, and perhaps the horses that Cyrene possessed, and he appreciated the strategic value of its location just to the west of Alexandria along the Mediterranean shore. She, no doubt, preferred the prestige and glamour of life in Alexandria to the relative obscurity of her birthplace in Libya. But the story about how she got there would likely follow her to her new home. Like all tales of murder and revenge, the lurid details would take on a life of their own, and even be exaggerated as the story was told and retold; so the challenge for the happy couple was how to control the narrative, how to retell the story of Demetrius’s murder so that Berenice’s collusion in it appeared to be justified and posed no threat to her new husband or the well-being of his state. This paper is about that effort and some of the creative forms it took.

We may begin with Justin, since he is our source, and notice that he presents the incident in a way that is favorable to Berenice. He stresses Demetrius’s ar-

rogance, which provoked the animosity of the people, and also Berenice's filial piety. In his account, her mother hears her daughter's voice as she stands at the door giving the soldiers orders to spare her mother. Though her mother tries for a while to save her lover by shielding him with her body, he is ultimately killed, and Berenice at one stroke punishes her mother's scandalous conduct while complying with her father's judgment in her choice of a husband (*Epit.* 26.3.7–8).

The emotionalism and moralism evident in this account, written by Trogus in the age of Augustus, and then rewritten by Justin a century or more later, may depend more on the authors' rhetorical training than on any historical source. Even without the lurid details, Justin is quite clear that the assassination of Demetrius was justified. In his version, Demetrius's arrogance and confidence in his good looks alienated both the royal court and the army, while his behavior outraged Berenice and the population as a whole (*Epit.* 26.3.4–5).<sup>8</sup> Justin also implies that Demetrius never actually married Berenice, whom he calls *virgo* (*Epit.* 26.3.3–4). Catullus, translating Callimachus, takes this point even further by consigning the incident to Berenice's childhood: she is not just *virgo*, but *parva virgo* (66.26). It is likely, though, that both of them were exaggerating. Berenice was old enough to marry, and Demetrius needed a formal tie in order to legitimate his rule. Since her father was dead and she had no male relatives, there were no impediments to a hasty wedding.

While Justin mounts a moralistic defense of Berenice, Catullus, translating Callimachus, uses other, more subtle approaches. In the "Lock," the "daring child" turns into a love-sick newly-wed. She weeps, she moans, she faints, and her virginity is renewed, only to be lost again, as the king goes off to lay waste to Assyria bearing the marks of a nocturnal struggle which he carried out for virginal spoils (66.11–14). The Lock asks, "What great god transformed you?" (66.31). And in this question lies the poet's explanation for his new, improved, loving, and trust-worthy Berenice. It's a miracle!

### 3. BERENICE ATHENA

The "Lock" was very likely Callimachus's last word on this subject, but it was not his only one. He tells the story in an entirely different way in his fifth Hymn, the *Hymn to Athena*.<sup>9</sup> Unlike *Hymns* 1–4 it is composed in a literary

<sup>8</sup> Here Justin is reading Demetrius's epithet too literally. Ὁ καλός, "the good-looker," is a tag typically used to describe young men whose attractiveness and availability for sex is advertised in ancient graffiti. It was intended neither as a compliment to Demetrius, nor a description of his appearance.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to Pfeiffer 1949–53 and D'Alessio 2007, see the text and commentary in Bulloch 1985.

Doric, which recalls the Greek dialect spoken at Cyrene.<sup>10</sup> How this reflects on Berenice can be inferred from a cameo, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, where she is dressed in a beautiful plumed helmet as Athena Parthenos.<sup>11</sup>

Like Berenice, Athena was born in Libya, where she leapt out of Zeus's head near the shore of Lake Tritonis, where she had her first bath, as we learn from Aeschylus (*Eum.* 292–93) and Apollonius of Rhodes (*Argon.* 4.1308–11). Herodotus (4.189) traces Athena's *aegis* to the goatskin mantles worn by Libyan women and notes (4.180) that the Libyans worshipped an armed goddess exactly like Athena, who wore the same Corinthian helmet and shield and was worshipped in festivals featuring ritual combat between teams of young women.

Like Athena, it was said that Berenice had experience on the battlefield—at least Hyginus tells us that she once took the field in support of her father when his troops were struggling (*Astr.* 2.24.11–18).<sup>12</sup> Though this may seem hard to believe, it was very much in the tradition of earlier Macedonian queens, like Alexander's mother Olympias and her adversary, Adea-Eurydice.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond battle, Berenice, like Athena, was a patron of the arts and sciences. She was associated with a coterie of poets, including Callimachus himself, who wrote for her and about her. When Callimachus hails her in an epigram as the fourth Grace (15 G-P), this is what he has in mind.

The suggestion that Berenice was Athena's avatar also had a political aspect, since Athens was very much in the Ptolemies' political orbit. Berenice and her husband were honored there in a number of ways, and Olga Palagia has identified a colossal marble head from the Agora as a portrait of her that probably stood in the gymnasium there, built by her husband for the Ptolemaia festival in the early years of his reign.<sup>14</sup>

Like Athena, Berenice had an asymmetrical relationship with her parents. Both goddess and queen honored only their fathers and cared nothing for

<sup>10</sup> On the Doric element in *Hymn* 5, see Bulloch 1985: 26–28. Though Callimachus himself was a Doric-speaking native of Cyrene, there is very little Doric in his extant work.

<sup>11</sup> No. 63, “Bérénice II assimilée à Athéna Parthénos,” in Vollenweider 1995: 80–1. No. 65 is another “Bérénice II assimilée à Athéna” engraved in coralline, perhaps for a ring.

<sup>12</sup> Hyginus identifies her father as Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who was her honorary “father” in official decrees. Her biological father was Magas of Cyrene, Philadelphus's half-brother. On Hyginus's sources see Stephens 2005: 241–42 with English translation and Marinone 1997: 23n28 with Latin text.

<sup>13</sup> Accounts of the battle between Olympias and Adea-Eurydice are found in Diod. Sic. 19.11 and Ath. 13.560F. All of the evidence is evaluated in Carney 1987.

<sup>14</sup> On the ways that the Euergetai were honored in Athens, see Palagia 2007: 237–38 and Habicht 1997: 182.

their mothers.<sup>15</sup> This paternal bias is duly noted at the conclusion of Callimachus's *Hymn* (5.131–36). This, his fifth, is one of the mimetic hymns that recreate, or seem to recreate, a religious festival as it unfolds in real time. On this particular occasion a statue of Athena is about to emerge from her temple in Argos and be carried in procession to the river Inachus, where it will receive a ritual bath.<sup>16</sup>

Callimachus brings us right into the moment in the opening lines, which are addressed to the “bath-pourers of Pallas.” The sacred mares have just begun to neigh and the goddess herself is ready to appear (5.1–3). The mares are presumably pulling the cart which will carry the statue, and their approach leads Callimachus at once into an aside of eight verses on Athena's devotion to horses (5.5–12). Even when her armor was spattered with gore after battling with the Giants, she cleaned the horses first before she bathed herself.

This section is widely read as interrupting the flow of the narrative and parenthetical to it.<sup>17</sup> It has been explained away as a scholarly aside referring to a cult of Athena Hippias,<sup>18</sup> but it is much simpler to see it as another point of contact between Athena and Berenice, whose team of horses won a victory at the Nemean games celebrated by Callimachus in the elaborate *action* that opens book 3.<sup>19</sup> Epigrams in the “new Posidippus” indicate that she won victories at the Olympian and Pythian games as well.<sup>20</sup>

The digression on Athena's horsemanship is followed immediately by another. Here the narrator tells the goddess's attendants what not to bring for her bath: jars of myrrh and mixed oils. These are of no interest to her, he says, because Athena anoints herself only with pure olive oil (5.13–32). It was first observed by Herter that Athena's λιτὰ χρίματα (“plain oil”) is echoed by the “simple oil” that Berenice's Lock says that he drank while the Queen

<sup>15</sup> On Athena's identification with her father, see Aesch. *Eum.* 736–38.

<sup>16</sup> The bathing ritual resembles the Athenian Plynteria, but there is no evidence except for this hymn that a ritual of this sort was enacted in Argos. See Bulloch 1985: 8–13 for a discussion of the details and the Ptolemaic interest in Argos, which may have motivated Callimachus's decision to place the ritual there.

<sup>17</sup> On the parenthetical quality of this passage, see Morrison 2005: 31–32 and Hunter 1992: 16.

<sup>18</sup> Kleinknecht 1939: 231–33.

<sup>19</sup> For the text of the “Victoria Berenices,” see D'Alessio 2007: 446–68; for the constitution of the text, its contents and location in the *Aetia*, Parsons 1977.

<sup>20</sup> In the *editio princeps* of *P.Mil.Vogl.* VIII 309, Bastianini and Gallazzi 2001: 205–6 identify the victorious Berenice of 78, 79, and 82 AB as Berenice II. Others, most prominently Thompson 2005: 272–79 and Criscuolo 2003, argue that she must be Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II, who perished in 245 B.C.E.

was unmarried and he still a feature of her coiffure (fr. 110.77–78 Pf.).<sup>21</sup> We have another point of contact, then, between the maidenly Berenice and the virgin, martial goddess.

But these are only digressions in the midst of the narrator's excited announcements of the goddess's imminent arrival at the festival. He urges everyone to be ready, then calls on Athena herself to appear (5.33–34). It is all very dramatic, and the statue is about to emerge from the shrine, when he warns the men in the crowd, "do not look at the Queen," meaning "do not look at the statue," or "do not look at the Goddess" who is also the Queen (5.51–54). Then there is an unexplained delay, and the poet takes this opportunity, which he created himself, to tell the worshippers a cautionary tale about the danger of looking at goddesses without their clothes on (5.57–136).

This is the story of Tiresias and how he lost his sight. As Callimachus tells the tale, Athena's dearest friend was the nymph Chariclo, who was her constant companion. One day they were together on Mt. Helicon when they decided to have a bath in Hippocrene and undid their robes. At just that moment Tiresias, Chariclo's son, who had been hunting in the area and was searching for water, happened to arrive at that very place and inadvertently saw the goddess naked. Athena was outraged and that night took away his eyesight (5.57–82). Even in the bare plotline we can see some parallels to Berenice's own history. Tiresias's misdemeanor is clearly a sexual one. He has seen what no man should see, and interestingly in Callimachus's telling, Athena is not the only object of his intruding eyes, but his mother is as well. Two women have been violated here, though only one seems to care—the one who is not the mother, and she has the power to punish the intruder.

Tiresias is silent throughout the entire narrative, but his mother is distraught and directs her despair at Athena, whose apologia suggests another way to think about Berenice's revenge. Athena says she had no choice in the matter. Cronus's law ordains that whoever sees an immortal without the god's permission must pay a great price. The fates spun this outcome for Tiresias at the moment he was born, and compared to Actaeon, who was torn limb from limb by his hounds when he stumbled upon Artemis in the bath, Tiresias got off easy. She concludes by giving Tiresias the gift of prophecy as a demonstration of her own magnanimity (5.97–130).

The story of Tiresias alone would have sufficed for Callimachus's purpose, but Actaeon's is added to demonstrate that the death penalty, the one exacted by Berenice, is perfectly appropriate for this kind of crime. Athena's denial

<sup>21</sup> Herter 1971: 423–26 (= Skiadas, ed. 1975: 195–98).



of personal responsibility can also be construed as a defense of Berenice. The gods will do what gods will do, and Athena's gifts to Tiresias imply that Berenice too can be generous within the constraints of her exalted position. In short, we are being invited to see Berenice as Athena, or at least to see that her actions, while questionable in human society, are exactly what we would expect from a goddess. Berenice who is godlike in her power, if not actually divine, bears no blame.

#### 4. BERENICE AGATHE TYCHE

Now, power can be used for good or ill. Though she may have harmed Tiresias, Athena also uses her might for the benefit of her devotees. In his *Hymn*, Callimachus calls her *πολιοῦχος*, "Protector of the City" (*H.* 5.53), and Berenice also played that role. In the Ptolemaic context the city is Alexandria, surrounded by water and looking north onto the Mediterranean at no great distance from Crete and other Greek islands. Ptolemaic foreign policy was oriented to the north and east, in the direction of Alexander's former empire, and it was sustained by a sizable fleet, which Berenice's husband used to good advantage during the Third Syrian War.<sup>22</sup> It was enlarged when he married Berenice and acquired Cyrene, which had a fleet of its own. Berenice herself was a ship-owner,<sup>23</sup> so it is not surprising to see her in the role of guardian of the seas.

Her nautical mission is celebrated in a mosaic from Tell Timai, ancient Thmuis, where she appears in full naval regalia, wearing a ship on her head and holding a yardarm in her hand like a royal scepter.<sup>24</sup> Her shield is behind her left shoulder, and on her right are the fillets of her diadem, that indispensable signifier of royalty. The ship is decorated with sea creatures and cornucopias, as well as the stars of the Dioscuri, symbols that also appear on her coins. Though the nearest parallel for a representation of a woman in armor like this is Athena Parthenos, she is not Athena here, but a kind of Agathe Tyche figure guaranteeing good fortune to the fleet and the city.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> On Euergetes' fleet, see Hölbl 2001: 48–51.

<sup>23</sup> *P.Ryl.* IV 576, but see Hauben 1979: 74 for objections to Turner's identification of Berenice as the owner.

<sup>24</sup> This mosaic is now in the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria along with another inferior version copied from the same original. The portrait was identified as Berenice's in Daszewski 1985.

<sup>25</sup> On the figure in the mosaic as a nautical Agathe Tyche, see Daszewski 1985: 147–48; on the increasing popularity of cults of Agathe Tyche beginning in the fourth century, see Tracy 1994.

Agathe Tyche appeared in many forms, and Berenice also played this role on a series of small oinochoai.<sup>26</sup> These jugs were made of cheap faience, formed in moulds and mass-produced in Egypt at this time. Many shards of similar jugs and a few complete ones have been found at various sites, mostly in Egypt and North Africa, but some as far away as Corinth and Athens. The vogue for them seems to start with Berenice's predecessor Arsinoe II and begins to peter out with her daughter and son, Arsinoe III and Ptolemy IV. Whichever Ptolemy appears in the center, the gesture and setting is always the same. In an intact example, now in Paris, all the details are clear: Berenice holds a phiale in her right hand as if she were pouring a libation, and in her left she is holding her cornucopia, the same one that appears on her coins and is also typical of Agathe Tyche figures.<sup>27</sup> There is a pillar on her left and above the altar, which is always on her right, her name is incised, Βερενίκης Βασιλίσσης ἀγαθῆς τύχης ("To Queen Berenice, Good Fortune").<sup>28</sup>

These cheap oinochoai with Berenice's image are what we might call "collectables" of the sort that are purchased to mark an emotional connection with an important public figure or event. They may have had some ritual use, or they could have been purchased in souvenir shops when visitors came to the city.<sup>29</sup> Arsinoe II, featured on the earliest of these jugs, was exceptionally popular with her people, and her images would have sold very well. The substitution of Berenice in the next generation transfers some of that good will to a character who may not have been quite so appealing.

Some of Arsinoe's oinochoai identify her not only by her name and title, but also by the name of the Egyptian goddess Isis.<sup>30</sup> Whether she should be understood as a worshipper of Isis, her representative here on earth, or the goddess herself is not clear, but for the Ptolemies, who took their clue from their pharaonic predecessors, these categories are blurred. Since the iconography on all the oinochoai of this type is exactly the same, we can assume that Berenice is also playing the role of Isis, and her relationship with the deity is confirmed by a contemporary papyrus that explicitly calls her "Isis mother of the gods."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> On the royal oinochoai, see Thompson 1973; on Egyptian faience generally, see Nenna and Seif El-Din 2000.

<sup>27</sup> Catalogue No. 29 in Thompson 1973. The genitive is used for toasts inscribed on vases of the early Hellenistic period. On the inscriptions on the oinochoai, see Thompson 1973: 19–20 and 51–62.

<sup>28</sup> Thompson 1973: 134.

<sup>29</sup> For ritual use, see Thompson 1973: 75.

<sup>30</sup> Nos. 142, 144, and 146 in Thompson 1973: 171–73.

<sup>31</sup> *P.Petr.* III 1 col. ii.6; Berenice wears Isis's distinctive clothing on no. 122 in Thompson 1973: 165–66.

## 5. BERENICE ISIS

Isis brings us back to Berenice's sacrifice of the lock. There are certainly Greek parallels for dedicating locks of hair at moments of grief, as physical manifestations of vows, or as markers for certain changes in social status.<sup>32</sup> In an Egyptian context, however, the lock signifies Isis, who cut her hair when she first heard of the death and dismemberment of Osiris, her brother and husband. Her lock was on display in her temple at Coptos, where she left it as a mark of her bereavement, and then wept copious tears that initiated the Nile flood, which begins the annual cycle of growth and renewal for the surrounding region.<sup>33</sup>

The lock, then, embodies Isis's role as a fertility goddess, and in cult, statuary, and sculptural relief she is the goddess of big hair. In Greek texts she is called εὐπλόκαμος ("with lovely locks") and εὐέθειρα ("well-coiffed").<sup>34</sup> Her priestesses at Philae and Dendara, who were called "Locks," shaved off their own hair, sacrificed it to the goddess, and wore luxuriant wigs.<sup>35</sup>

As a fertility goddess Isis was assimilated not only to Demeter, but also to Aphrodite, and a variety of evidence links Arsinoë with Aphrodite in her capacity as patron of love and marriage.<sup>36</sup> It was at the temple of Arsinoë-Aphrodite at Cape Zephyrium that Berenice dedicated her lock. The shrine was a gift from the admiral Callicrates of Samos, and it is celebrated in epigrams by Callimachus, Hedylus, and Posidippus, which make clear the connection with Cyprian Aphrodite in whose care is the safety of men at sea.<sup>37</sup> Berenice later played this role herself at a shrine where she was worshipped as Berenice Σωζούση, Berenice "the Savior."<sup>38</sup>

Isis's lock remained in her temple, but Callimachus tells us that Berenice's was swept away from the temple by Zephyr, whose winds were metaphorical horses, placed in Aphrodite's chaste lap (i.e., dipped in the sea), and rose still

<sup>32</sup> Gutzwiller 1992: 369–71.

<sup>33</sup> Nachtergaele 1981: 595–606.

<sup>34</sup> On these and other epithets of Isis relating to her hair, see Nachtergaele 1981: 589.

<sup>35</sup> Nachtergaele 1981: 586–87; Daumas 1969: 14 and n109, 16–17.

<sup>36</sup> Gutzwiller 1992: 363–64 and n18.

<sup>37</sup> Posidippus is the author of three epigrams on the temple: 39 AB, 116 AB = 12 G-P and 119 AB = 13 G-P, while Callimachus alludes to it both here (fr. 110.56–58) and in epigram 14 G-P. Hedylus's epigram, 4 G-P, focuses on a rhyton dedicated in the temple. See Stephens 2005: 245–48 and Bing 2002/3.

<sup>38</sup> The temple, located in the Fayyum, was dedicated by her son, Ptolemy IV Philopator (Zen. 3.94). Another, dedicated to Berenike Aktia, "of the headland" (*P.Ryl.* IV 585), also suggests a nautical function. See Fraser 1972: 2.388nn382 and 385.

damp at dawn to take his place among the constellations of the Northern hemisphere.<sup>39</sup> From an Egyptian perspective, Daniel Selden explains, the Lock, who died when he was severed from Berenice's head, is mourned in the customary way by his female relatives, that is, his sister locks, and takes his place among the stars like other souls of the dead in the traditional Egyptian manner as described in the *Books of the Dead*.<sup>40</sup>

In Callimachus's poem, his location in the Northern sky is put in terms of the familiar Greek constellations: the Coma Berenices is between Virgo and savage Leo, next to Ursa Major, with slow Bootes following (Catull. 66.65–68). Looking at the Coma's position from the perspective of Egyptian star charts, Selden calculates that it is located precisely where Isis, in the form of a Hippopotamus, holds in check the forces of chaos, represented by a Bull's Thigh, which is Ursa Major. He concludes that the Lock, which once belonged to Berenice, Isis's incarnation on earth, has now joined the goddess and her crew of celestial helpers in their never-ending struggle to maintain order in the universe.<sup>41</sup> The Lock has become immortal, in both Egyptian and Greek terms, and this in turn implies that Berenice herself can look forward to the same future.

## 6. LOVE AND MARRIAGE

The poem doesn't end with the Lock's catasterism, however, but rather with his expression of regret at being parted forever from the head of his mistress. He reminisces about the simple hair oils he used to drink before her marriage (Callim. fr. 110.77–78), and asks that she endow him with abundant gifts of unguents whenever the festal lamp is lit and she propitiates Venus (Catull. 66.89–92). In Catullus's text this discourse is interrupted with an aside of ten verses (66.79–88). Here the Lock speaks not to Berenice alone, but to all brides on their wedding night "who cherish marriage on a chaste bed," and asks that they offer him gifts of perfume from their onyx jars. But "whoever has given herself to impure adultery, let the light dust drink up their unfavorable and useless gifts." He seeks nothing from the unworthy, but wishes them all faithful love.

These verses cannot be found on *P.Oxy.* 2258, the source of the Greek text at this point, nor is there any empty space in which they could be fit.<sup>42</sup> This fact and the abruptness of the change of addressee suggest the possibility

<sup>39</sup> I follow the Lock's itinerary in West 1985.

<sup>40</sup> Selden 1998: 340–43.

<sup>41</sup> Selden 1998: 343–44.

<sup>42</sup> See Lobel's comments in the *ed. pr.*, p. 92.

that these verses were not translated from Callimachus's text, but were Catullus's original composition. Certainly, as Putnam has shown, the heightened emotional intensity of the verses and the theme of happiness through fidelity suit Catullus well.<sup>43</sup> And some readers would prefer that their sophisticated, urbane Callimachus not be found lecturing brides on their wedding nights.

An alternative, proposed by Pfeiffer, is to assume that there were two versions of Callimachus's poem in circulation, an earlier one represented by the papyrus, and a final version that was revised before it became the dramatic conclusion of book 4 of the *Aetia*.<sup>44</sup> The final version would have been known at Rome, where it inspired Catullus 66. This hypothesis is supported by the papyrus itself where the "Lock" is followed by a concluding distich (10.94a–94b Pf.), apparently a hymnic farewell, that is absent from Catullus's translation.<sup>45</sup>

Pfeiffer's interpretation has been widely accepted, and if it is correct, then it is likely that Callimachus himself added the ten verses that Catullus then translated. The parenthetical quality of these verses is not a problem for Callimachus, whose enemies complain in the *Aetia* Prologue that he never writes anything that is a continuous whole (fr. 1.3). There are two examples of long parentheses in the *Hymn to Athena* discussed above (5.5–12 and 13–32). And Gutzwiller and Rossi have shown that the theme of love and marriage is as relevant to Callimachus as it is to Catullus.<sup>46</sup>

Cameron has expressed concern that the Lock's lecture on fidelity seems to be calling into question Berenice's own marriage—which would be indiscrete, to say the least<sup>47</sup>—but this misses the point. Berenice's current marriage is never in question. It is her first one that the poet alludes to here, the one desecrated by her husband and her mother. This is the kind of marriage the Lock abhors, and here at the conclusion of the poem, Callimachus comes round to the point where he started out: Berenice's transformation into a virtuous, loving bride, whose offerings the Lock welcomes.

The nature of the offering—perfumed oil—is especially suited to Berenice. Flowers, particularly roses, as well as the aromatics made from them, made a substantial contribution to the economy of Cyrene, which was, in effect, her dowry, and Athenaeus tells us that the perfume industry was associated explicitly with Berenice (15.689A). In an epigram where Callimachus appoints

<sup>43</sup> Putnam 1960: 225–27.

<sup>44</sup> Pfeiffer 1949–53: 2.xxxvi–xxxviii.

<sup>45</sup> Discussion and bibliography in Marinone 1997: 41–54.

<sup>46</sup> On conjugal love and fidelity as a Ptolemaic ideal, see Rossi 2000 and Gutzwiller 1992.

<sup>47</sup> Cameron 1995: 106.

her as a fourth Grace, her statue is “newly made and dripping with perfume” (15 G-P). Fragrant skin is a feature of divinity, particularly of Isis, but here it is also an acknowledgement of an important source of her wealth.

## 7. A NEW BERENICE

The “Lock” represents Callimachus’s hopes for Berenice’s new marriage, and with that marriage she acquired a new family. Not only were Berenice and her husband spouses, but contemporary inscriptions, like the Canopus decree (OGIS 56), present them as brother and sister, in imitation of their predecessors, Arsinoe II and Ptolemy II, the Philadelphoi, who were full siblings as well as spouses. Berenice was her husband’s cousin, not his sister. Callimachus has some fun with this convention in the *Coma* where he asks whether the tears Berenice shed at her husband’s departure were for her deserted marriage bed or the absence of a dear brother (Catull. 66.21–22). He is being witty, but the policy that made their marriage incestuous was entirely serious.

Pretending that Berenice and her husband were brother and sister, when there is no basis for it in reality, was another way of erasing her past since it involves giving her new parents. Her biological parents were Magas of Cyrene and his Seleucid wife, Apame. These facts were certainly known at Alexandria. Callimachus wrote a poem for Magas, and she is identified as Queen Berenice, daughter of Magas, on the base of her family statue-group at Thermos, in Aetolia (IG IX, I<sup>2</sup> I 56). Nonetheless, in official inscriptions posted during their reign, like the Canopus decree (OGIS 56), both she and her husband are presented as the offspring of Arsinoe II and Ptolemy II. Not only was this untrue for her, but for him as well. His mother had been Arsinoe I, Philadelphus’s first wife, who had been banished on charges of plotting against him. Philadelphus had no children by his sister.

There were a number of reasons for rewriting history in this way, but one effect of the change was literally to make Berenice a new woman. With a new mother and a new father, she was no longer the same person who had murdered her first husband. Though, of course, she had. After she made quick work of Demetrius “the Fair,” she married Ptolemy III Euergetes. To judge by his coin portraits, he was not exactly fair, but his wealth and power made him attractive in other ways.<sup>48</sup> The couple had six children, and all eight members of the family were portrayed in groups of statues at Delphi and

<sup>48</sup> The iconography on a gold octodrachm issued by his son shows why she wanted to marry him. It includes the royal diadem, the aegis of Zeus, a winged scepter that looks like the trident of Poseidon, and a crown projecting the rays of the sun god Helios and the horns of Ammon (No. 316, Mørkholm 1991: 108–9).

also at Thermos.<sup>49</sup> The statues themselves have long since disappeared, but bases have survived with her children's names. There was young Ptolemy, who later became Ptolemy IV Philopator; Arsinoe III, who married her brother; the Princess Berenice, who died young and whose deification is described in the Canopus decree; another son, whose name is lost; Alexander; and Magas, who was named for his maternal grandfather.

Family groups, like this one, with inscriptions that stress the Ptolemies' Macedonian origins, were clearly intended to communicate to the Greek world images of dynastic health and vigor, and to present Berenice as the virtuous mother and wife. But the wholesome image hid the family's secrets. After her husband died in 221 B.C.E., their eldest son became the fourth Ptolemy to succeed to the throne, and sometime soon after that he had his mother poisoned and his brother Magas scalded in his bath (Polyb. 15.25.2). Apparently, there was some dispute about the succession. In his youth he had been given the title "Philopator," the "Father-lover," to designate him as Ptolemy III's chosen successor, but Berenice, like her own mother before her, had her own ideas about who should be king.

Berenice's favorite was Magas, a younger son who was popular with the army and a potential threat to his brother. Philopator could have solved this difficulty by simply doing away with Magas, but he had Berenice killed as well. Apparently, he could not feel secure as long as she lived. Twenty-five years after coming to Alexandria she was still a player in the ruthless world of Ptolemaic family dynamics.

In fact, she had not changed at all from that daring young girl whose noble crime won her a royal marriage. In Alexandria she acquired a hat-rack with Athena's helmet, Agathe Tyche's ship, and Isis's locks; it held the costumes she wore in the royal pageant designed to maintain Ptolemaic hegemony. But she never changed from that Macedonian princess whose genes held a family curse that is the stuff of Greek tragedy. What could be a worse fate than to be killed by your own child? And afterwards her son made her a goddess, with an honored place in the family dynastic cult, where she had precedence, for the first time ever, over Arsinoe.<sup>50</sup> Her priestess was called *Athlophorus* (the "prize-bearer") in recognition of her crown victories. This seems like the height of cynicism, though it was only business as usual.

And Berenice did become immortal, though it was not the empty gesture of her son that had the power to accomplish this. No, it was an astronomer and two poets, one Greek and the other Roman. The first fashioned a universal sign

<sup>49</sup> Discussion and identification of the children's names are found in Bennett 2002.

<sup>50</sup> On Berenice's cult, see Fraser 1972: 1.219 and nn238–39.

for her in the night sky, and the others transformed her life into art. This came about not by intrigue or murder, but by their very opposite, her patronage of the arts and sciences. In this she was walking in the steps of her predecessors who established the great Library and Museum at Alexandria, then attracted to them intellectual and artistic talent from all over the Greek world.

She counted among her poets Posidippus, Apollonius, and, of course, Callimachus. He had begun his relationship with the Ptolemies more than thirty years earlier, and now in the last decade of his long career, she inspired some of his best work. She was his fourth Grace, his muse. In the *Hymn to Athena*, when Tiresias comes upon the goddess, she is not in Argos, where the ceremony is taking place, or in Athens, where she had her great temple, but bathing in Hippocrene on Mt. Helicon (*H.* 5.70–72), the very place where Hesiod first met the Muses (*Theog.* 1–23) and Callimachus says he was carried in a dream (fr. 2 Pf.).

In the “Lock,” which is widely considered to be his masterpiece, Callimachus literally recreates his Queen, fusing her questionable past, hopeful present, and glorious future into one timeless image in the night sky. But Callimachus was not star-struck, and his Berenice is no Isis. The goddess’s lock stayed obediently in her temple at Coptos, while Berenice’s protests loudly against the stripping away of his, and by extension, her humanity. Becoming immortal has its costs. What ordinary mortals ever have to listen to the ranting and raving of their own hair? In fact, it is Callimachus’s exquisite sense of the ridiculous, as well as his willingness to acknowledge the hard questions about Berenice’s past that catapult him far above the ranks of ordinary court poets. And if she was able to hear a poem like this without saying, “Off with his head,” she must have had some genuine literary sophistication and even a degree of self-awareness.<sup>51</sup> It might not be an exaggeration to call the “Lock” and the other poems Callimachus wrote for her collaborations of a kind. Even if all she contributed was financial support, a willing ear, and a preference for poetry beyond the ordinary, these were essential ingredients for the creation of great art.

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<sup>51</sup> Not so Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who authorized the execution of the poet Sotades, who had insulted him and his sister/wife Arsinoe II with a rude remark about their incestuous marriage (Cameron 1995: 18–20).



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