

# Egyptian Callimachus

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## VII

SUSAN A. STEPHENS

### EGYPTIAN CALLIMACHUS

For over 75 years scholars have been identifying elements of Callimachus' poetry as Egyptian, that is, as having as a primary referent something that is known from pharaonic culture rather than Greek<sup>1</sup>. For the most part this has been unsystematic, but scholars like Thomas Gelzer, Reinhold Merkelbach, and, most prominently, Ludwig Koenen<sup>2</sup> increasingly have read Callimachus' poetry as a reflection of the unique environment of the Ptolemaic court. Through their efforts, the details of Ptolemaic documents have been pressed into service to illuminate Ptolemaic kingship, which was by necessity situated in two separate

<sup>1</sup> The earliest known to me is F. WASSERMANN's note in *Philologische Wochenschrift* 45 (1925), 1277 arguing that lines 86-8 from Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*: περιπρὸ γὰρ εὐρὺ βέβηκεν. | ἐσπέριος κεῖνός γε τελεῖ τά κεν ἦρι νοήσῃ | ἐσπέριος τὰ μέγιστα, τὰ μείονα δ', εὖτε νοήσῃ echo a famous inscription, the Kubban stele of Ramesses II: "Es gibt kein Land, das du nicht durchschritten hast", and "Wenn du nachts dir etwas geträumt hast, so ist es bei Tagesanbruch schnell gesehen".

<sup>2</sup> L. KOENEN's main contributions to the subject are: *Eine agonistische Inschrift aus Ägypten und frühptolemäische Königsfeste*, *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 56 (Meisenheim am Glan 1977); his edition of an inscription relating to the Genethlia and Basileia, the appendix of which is devoted to a discussion of the Egyptian elements of the *Heracliscus*; "Die Adaptation ägyptischer Königsideologie am Ptolemäerhof", in *Egypt and the Hellenistic World*, ed. by E. VAN'T DACK *et al.*, *Studia Hellenistica* 27 (Leuven 1983), 143-90, on the Ptolemaic adaption of Egyptian ideologies of kingship, in which he treats Callimachus at length (see especially 174-90); and "The Ptolemaic King as a Religious Figure", in *Images and Ideologies. Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*, ed. by A. BULLOCH *et al.* (Berkeley 1993), 25-115, in which he reprises much of his earlier work but adds an up-to-date discussion of Ptolemaic chronology, royal titulature, and new material on the *Lock*.

cultural traditions — that of a hellenistic Greek monarch and that of an Egyptian pharaoh<sup>3</sup>. We are indebted especially to Koenen for a much clearer understanding of this Greek/Egyptian milieu in which Callimachus and Theocritus wrote. We can with some confidence date the *Heracliscus* as well as the *Hymn to Zeus* to the beginning of Philadelphus' reign<sup>4</sup>, and we have gained valuable insights into the ways in which Ptolemaic practices sometimes modelled themselves on or even translated Egyptian ideas. This Ptolemaic self-representation has frequently been characterized as 'double': W. Peremans<sup>5</sup>, for example, in 1987 wrote about the "bicephalous" nature of Ptolemaic administration and L. Koenen in 1993 wrote of "The Janus Head of Ptolemaic Kingship". Merkelbach<sup>6</sup> and Koenen, in particular, have explored the ramifications of this conceptual doubleness within writings of the Hellenistic poets. Their work is historicizing, contextualizing, and situated within the scholarly tradition of *Realien*. More recently, P. Bing, D. Selden, and I have attempted more sustained literary readings that nonetheless depend on this formulation of representational duality — of Egyptian ideas repositioned in Greek myth<sup>7</sup>.

At this date, the number of poems of Callimachus for which a partial or even extensive framework of Greek/Egyptian

<sup>3</sup> Herodotus 2.35, for example, diametrically opposes the two cultures.

<sup>4</sup> J.J. CLAUSS, "Lies and Allusions: The Addressee and Date of Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*", in *ClAnt* 5 (1986), 155-70, adapting the arguments for the dating of the Basileia from KOENEN 1977, argues persuasively that the *Hymn to Zeus* was (like the *Heracliscus*) written for the Basileia. G.B. D'ALESSIO (ed.), *Callimaco. 1: Inni, Epigrammi, Ecloghe; 2: Aitia, Giambi e altri frammenti* (Milano 1996), 72-3, n.18 expresses reservations.

<sup>5</sup> "Les Lagides, les élites indigènes et la monarchie bicéphale", in *Le système palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 19-22 juin 1985*, éd. par E. LÉVY, Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce antiques 9 (Leiden 1987), 327-43.

<sup>6</sup> "Das Königtum der Ptolemäer und die hellenistischen Dichter", in *Alexandrien. Kulturbegegnungen dreier Jahrtausende im Schmelztiegel einer mediterranen Grossstadt*, Aegyptiaca Treverensia 1 (Mainz 1981), 27-35.

<sup>7</sup> My own forthcoming study (Berkeley 2002), entitled *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria*, treats Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius in the context of this 'double' Greek/Egyptian view of the world.

doubleness has been claimed includes the *Hymn to Zeus*<sup>8</sup>, the *Hymn to Apollo*<sup>9</sup>, and the *Hymn to Delos*<sup>10</sup>, poems that focus on the birth and youth of Zeus or Apollo and include references to contemporary monarchs. The *Lock of Berenice* has received a similar treatment by Koenen<sup>11</sup> and in greater detail by Selden<sup>12</sup>. The argument advanced in all these studies is not simply familiarity with, or occasional allusion to Egyptian ideas by Callimachus, but to a pervasive, thematic confluence of ideas and story patterns. Koenen describes this ideology of the court as follows:

"We should...look behind the appearance and draw attention to the ideas expressed in the Greek or Egyptian forms, and on that level it becomes possible that the idea belongs to the Greek or the Egyptian tradition and yet is expressed in forms and conventions that render the idea understandable for the other segment of the population"<sup>13</sup>.

Selden applies this overarching scheme specifically to Callimachus:

[The reader who approaches a poem from a strictly Hellenic point of view] compelled to make sense of the diverse data of the poem ... finds himself drawn more and more into an Egyptian order of ideas. To comprehend the piece in full, he can no longer remain securely within the horizons of Hellenic culture, but must make the transposition from one discursive system to the other<sup>14</sup>.

These are bold claims and have been met with some scepticism. Earlier critics have been quick to point out, for example, that

<sup>8</sup> S. STEPHENS, "Callimachus at Court", in *Genre in Hellenistic Poetry*, Hellenistica Groningana 3 (1998), 167-83.

<sup>9</sup> D.L. SELDEN, "Alibis", in *ClAnt* 17 (1998), 326-54.

<sup>10</sup> KOENEN 1983, 174-90; 1993, 81-4; *Callimachus. Hymn to Delos*, Introduction and Commentary by W.H. MINEUR (Leiden 1984), 12-14; P. BING, *The Well-Read Muse. Past and Present in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets*, Hypomnemata 90 (Göttingen 1988), 128-43.

<sup>11</sup> KOENEN 1993, 89-113.

<sup>12</sup> D.L. SELDEN, *art.cit.*, 326-54.

<sup>13</sup> KOENEN 1993, 29.

<sup>14</sup> SELDEN, *art.cit.*, 353.



Callimachus does not write hymns to Egyptian gods or even mention Egypt very much in his poetry, that his poems are explicable within Greek terms and, therefore, to seek an Egyptian explanation for events or details is unnecessary or overly imaginative<sup>15</sup>. It is possible to counter that if we did not possess the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, we could still understand and interpret the *Aeneid*; but the possession of these earlier texts obviously allows a different dimension to the analysis. Still, the criticisms underscore a real difficulty with an approach that reads Egyptian meanings into Greek poems. The conceptual framework of 'doubleness' requires a coherent Greek narrative to which an equally coherent but different Egyptian narrative responds. Reconstruction of the latter has necessarily focussed on explaining aspects of what must be — for the majority of classical scholars — unfamiliar Egyptian belief systems, and too little invested in exploring the ways in which Callimachus prepares his reader by creating an Egypt derived from the myths and ethnographies of earlier Greek culture.

In this paper, therefore, I want to open up the working hypotheses of Koenen and Selden by concentrating on Callimachus' positioning of Egypt in his own poetry, that is, to explore the variety of ways in which persons, places, or things Egyptian appear. 'Egypt' and 'Egyptian' manifests itself in four different ways: we find (1) an 'Egypt' as it appears in previous Greek myth; (2) the 'Egypt' of historians and ethnographers like Herodotus and Hecataeus of Abdera, who attempt to position native traditions and belief systems *vis-à-vis* Greek; (3) the 'Egypt' that would have been experienced by those who lived in Ptolemaic Alexandria in the first half of the third-century BC; and (4) the indigenous beliefs and practices of Egyptian culture,

<sup>15</sup> See the extensive comments of G. WEBER, *Dichtung und höfische Gesellschaft. Die Rezeption von Zeitgeschichte am Hof der ersten drei Ptolemäer*, Hermes Einzelschriften 62 (Stuttgart 1993), 371-88, especially 381-3, and G. ZANKER, "Current Trends in the Study of Hellenic Myth in Early Third-Century Alexandrian Poetry: The Case of Theocritus", in *A&A* 35 (1989), 91-9. Zanker is concerned with Theocritus, but his criticisms are applicable to Callimachus as well.

which may or may not have been recorded in previous Greek writings about Egypt. Throughout, I hope to demonstrate how and where Callimachus crosses from constructions of Egypt embedded in Greek thought to include ideas that are novel and essentially derived from an experience of contemporary Egypt, and the role this *Kreuzung* plays within Callimachus' fundamentally Greek texts.

The *Aetia* is a good place to begin. Even in its fragmentary state, interaction between Greece and Egypt (or Libya) is discernable on at least three different levels: the fictive narrative frame, the choice of mythological subject matter, and the inclusion of specific contemporary figures. The fictive frame begins with the narrating ego — Callimachus — attacking his critics, the so-called Telchines, and then being transported via a dream to Hesiod's Helicon, where he encounters the Muses. A late epigram in the *Palatine Anthology* (7.42.5-6) tells us that Callimachus was relocated from Libya to Helicon, that is, from a contemporary Cyrene or Egypt to mainland Greece. Although contemporary critics usually assume Libya must refer to Cyrene, it need not do so. Ancient geographers designated the continent of Africa, from the pillars of Hercules to the west bank of the Nile, 'Libya'. In the *Apotheosis of Arsinoe* (fr. 228.51 Pf.), for example, Libya includes Alexandria. Other intertextual markers in the prologue reinforce this local specificity, to which I will momentarily return. But to continue with the frame: book 2 even in its very fragmentary state appears to contain a similar geographic translation. The unplaced fr. 178 Pf. contains a description of a symposium held at the house of an Athenian named Pollis, who was a resident in Egypt, but who nevertheless celebrated Attic festivals, transposing his Athenian practice to Egypt<sup>16</sup>. Since the one securely placed fragment of book 2

<sup>16</sup> The festival he celebrates is the Aiora, the subject of the myth, Erigone, the daughter of Icarius, whose death was "most lamented by Attic women" (fr. 178.4 Pf.). (To this we might compare the opening of book 3, where Egyptian women mourn the Apis.) Erigone was the subject of a poem by Eratosthenes, about which

portrays Callimachus as repeating to the Muses what he heard at a symposium (fr. 43.12-17 Pf.), J. Zetzel has ingeniously argued that fr. 178 could begin book 2, extrapolating the following organizing principle: Callimachus himself now recollects a series of stories that he heard from the Ician guest at Pollis' symposium in his conversation with the Muses<sup>17</sup>. If Zetzel is correct, Pollis' relocation to Egypt reverses the initial (metaphorical) movement of Callimachus to Greece<sup>18</sup>. Consensus now holds that the third book opens with an elegiac epinician on the occasion of Berenice's victory at the Nemean games (fr. 383 Pf. + SH 254). The opening of this poem again foregrounds transcontinental movement, as news of the victory is brought "from the land of cow-born Danaus to Helen's island", or from a Greece (Argos) defined in terms of Egypt and to an Egypt (Pharos) defined in terms of Greece. The opening of book 4 is missing. But the fragmentary line with which the *Diegeseis* for this book opens — fr. 86 Pf.: Μοῦ]σαί μοι βασιλῆ[ ἀεί]δειν — echoes *Aetia* fr. 1.3, and could easily belong to a proemium. In light of the opening of book 3 and the closing of book 4, βασιλῆ[ might here also refer to a Ptolemy<sup>19</sup>. If so, we should again be located in Egypt. Even the epilogue, which incorporates language of the prologue and dream, makes mention of "our queen" (fr. 112.2 Pf.: ἀνᾶσσης).

R. MERKELBACH claims that "what at first glance appears entirely Greek, is from another viewpoint wholly Egyptian", see "Tragödie, Komödie und dionysische Kulte (nach der Erigone der Eratosthenes)", in *Antaios* 5 (1963/64), 343. This is reprinted in *Hestia und Erigone. Vorträge und Aufsätze*, hrsg. von W. BLÜMEL *et al.* (Stuttgart und Leipzig 1996), 194. Erigone's search for her dead father, Icarius, is, in broad outline, similar to Isis' search for the murdered Osiris; and Icarius himself, as the disseminator of wine for mankind, functions as an alter-ego for Dionysus, whom Greeks equated with Osiris.

<sup>17</sup> J.E.G. ZETZEL, "On the Opening of Callimachus, *Aetia* II", in *ZPE* 42 (1981), 31-33 and see A. CAMERON's discussion, *Callimachus and His Critics* (Princeton 1985), 133-7.

<sup>18</sup> Even if Zetzel is mistaken, wherever we locate fr. 178 Pf. in the *Aetia* it involves exchange between Greece and Egypt.

<sup>19</sup> So D'ALESSIO, *op.cit.*, 500, n.1. The arguments for equating βασιλῆ[ with either Zeus or Apollo are not persuasive.



The final poem, the *Lock of Berenice*, ends with a different translation, the catasterism of the lock. The severed lock moves from mortality to immortality, from the head of a Ptolemaic Egyptian queen, to the temple of Aphrodite Zephyritis, to its final location in the heavens, where the court astronomer identifies it as a new constellation. The placement of this poem at the end of the whole *Aetia* compels a contrast with the prologue. There Callimachus' wish for poetic immortality is expressed in a Greek metaphor, namely, his desire to become the cicada. The justification for his entry into this supposedly blessed state is the transformative quality of his poetry, as the *Lock* must be intended to demonstrate. The fact that, for the whole of the *Aetia*, the closing example of Callimachus' poetic skill is set within an Egyptian space gives credibility to an argument for the importance of Egypt within the poem. Moreover, if Koenen's and Selden's analyses are correct, this final poetic transformation, the catasterism of the lock, adheres closely to Egyptian models. The experience of the lock, mourned by its "sister locks" and emerging from the sea to take its place as a new constellation, closely parallels Egyptian belief that the soul of the dead emerged from the waters of the Underworld to fly up into the heavens where it became a star<sup>20</sup>. In the process of achieving immortality the lock swears an oath by the head of the queen, expressed in negatives: that it departed unwilling and did not know the unguents characteristic of the married state. Koenen has pointed out the similarity between these remarks and the confession of a blameless life stated in a series of negatives that Egyptians believed they must swear in order to gain entrance to the afterlife, to which purpose they were buried with *Books of the Dead* which contained this so-called 'negative confession'<sup>21</sup>. What begins, then, as a Greek construct of Egypt at the opening of the *Aetia*, by the final poem appears both to encompass what were fundamentally Egyptian ideas and transform

<sup>20</sup> SELDEN, *art.cit.*, 340.

<sup>21</sup> KOENEN 1993, 98-109.



them for Greek readers. We end with a triple translation: the lock to a star, which is proleptic of Berenice's own apotheosis; Egyptian into Greek; and the insignificant and mundane into a fit subject for poetry.

Exchange between Greece and Egypt is to be found throughout the prologue. The opening of the *Aetia* has a number of elements that seem to serve as intertextual reinforcements of this interchange. For example, Callimachus chooses pygmies and cranes to illustrate his point about lengthy poems: [. . .]ον ἐπὶ Θρήϊκας ἀπ' Αἰγύπτιοιο [πέτοιο | αἶματ]! Πυγμαλίων ἠδομένη [γ]έρα[νος (fr. 1.13-14 Pf.). These lines imitate the opening of *Iliad*, book 3, 3-6, though the direction of the cranes' flight is reversed from that in Homer—in Callimachus they move *from* Egypt to Thrace. On one level, this reinforces an Alexandrian poetics that would banish ugly sounds from Egypt<sup>22</sup>. It also reproduces the direction of the flight of cranes in Euripides' *Helen*, who as they fly over the unwatered plains of Libya are exhorted to carry the news of Helen's return to Greece<sup>23</sup>. At the opening of the *Victory for Berenice*, also, "Helen's island" draws the reader's attention to a figure who famously provided an early mythological link between Greece and Egypt. In the *Iliad* she was the unfaithful wife of Menelaus who is seduced by Paris and carried off to Troy, thus precipitating the war. From later testimony we learn that it was not Helen herself, but her image that the gods dispatched to Troy, while the 'real' Helen remained in Egypt, to be later recovered by her husband on his return from the Trojan war. In his Egypt book, Herodotus devotes several chapters to the myth (2.113-20). In his version a pious Egyptian priest of the Delta refuses to allow Paris, when blown off course for Troy, to continue his voyage with another man's wife. He insists on bringing him to the Egyptian king, Proteus,

<sup>22</sup> See N. ANDREWS, "Philosophical Satire", in *Genre in Hellenistic Poetry*, Hellenistica Groningana 3 (Groningen 1998), 1-19 on the role of sound in hellenistic aesthetics.

<sup>23</sup> *Hel.* 1478-94. I am indebted to Benjamin Acosta-Hughes for this observation.

for judgment. Proteus immediately dispatches Paris, but keeps Helen in Egypt where she spends the war. Euripides' tragedy capitalizes on the inherently bilocal nature of the Helen myth and its attendant ambiguities. By staging his play at the moment when Menelaus returns from Troy to find the wife over whom he fought a war for ten years resident in Egypt, Euripides forces Helen constantly to confront her other mythological self. At the heart of the play is the question: which is the real Helen, the good wife (in Egypt) or a bad wife (in Troy)?

In addition to cranes leaving Egypt, the opening section mentions the Persian chain (fr. 1.18), which was a land measure in use in Egypt; it introduces an animal fable, the subject of which is the ass, the essential beast of burden in Egypt. In the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods the ass is especially identified with Seth-Typhon, who is the archenemy of Horus-Apollo<sup>24</sup>. There are also places in the prologue where a case can be made for Callimachus evoking Egypt indirectly. The first is a passage based on the *Frogs*, which Callimachus imitates with his weighing of the fictional fat ladies (fr. 1.9-12 Pf.). In Aristophanes' scene, Dionysus counsels Euripides to add something to the scale that will drag it down (καθέλξει), something large and powerful (1398: καρτερόν τι καὶ μέγα). To Euripides' final entry: "iron-weighted club" (1402), Aeschylus counters: "chariot upon chariot, corpse upon corpse" (1403). To this Dionysus replies "not even a hundred Egyptians could lift" them (1406). Egyptians are associated with strength and weight, or with the aesthetic position that Callimachus rejects<sup>25</sup>.

Secondly, the phrase ἄεισμα ἔν occurs in Herodotus 2.79 in a passage describing Egyptian song in relation to Greek:

τοῖσι [sc. the Egyptians] ἄλλα τε ἐπάξιά ἐστι νόμιμα καὶ δὴ καὶ ἄεισμα ἔν ἐστι, Λίνος, ὅς περ ἔν τε Φοινίκη ἀοίδιμός ἐστι καὶ ἐν Κύπρῳ καὶ ἄλλῃ ...· συμφέρεται δὲ ὡυτὸς εἶναι τὸν οἱ Ἕλληνας

<sup>24</sup> See H. TE VELDE, *Seth, God of Confusion* (Leiden 1967), 14, especially n.4 and, e.g., PLUT. *De Iside et Osiride* 30, 362 E-363 A.

<sup>25</sup> See W. WIMMEL, *Kallimachos in Rom. Die Nachfolge seines apologetischen Dichtens in der Augusteerzeit* (Wiesbaden 1960), 115, n.1 for an extensive list of correspondences between Callimachus and the *Frogs*.

Λίνον ὀνομάζοντες αἰδοῦσι. ... φαίνονται [sc. Egyptians] δὲ αἰεὶ  
 κοτε τοῦτον αἰδόντες· ἔστι δὲ Αἰγυπτιστὶ ὁ Λίνος καλούμενος  
 Μανερῶς. ἔφασαν δὲ μιν Αἰγύπτιοι τοῦ πρώτου βασιλεύσαντος  
 Αἰγύπτου παῖδα μounογενέα γενέσθαι, ἀποθανόντα δὲ αὐτὸν ἄωρον  
 θρήνοισι τούτοις ὑπὸ Αἰγυπτίων τιμηθῆναι, καὶ αἰοδὴν τε ταύτην  
 πρώτην καὶ μούνην σφίσι γενέσθαι.

Herodotus makes a point in this passage that may be significant for our understanding of Callimachus: the claim that the Linus song is the only one Egyptians have and that they have always sung it fits well with the verdict on Egyptian music made by Plato. Plato, in the *Laws*, has a lengthy discussion of Egyptian aesthetic practices, and he singles out Egyptian genres for praise because of their stability and unchangeability even over long periods of time. It is their very lack of *polyeideia* that he finds admirable<sup>26</sup>. If Plato could invoke Egyptian genres to support his arguments about poetry, then it would not be extraordinary for Callimachus to insert Egypt into his own discussion of poetic values, especially since he demonstrates familiarity with Plato elsewhere in the *Prologue*. Nor is it inherently unlikely that Callimachus appropriated Herodotus' phrase to characterize the kind of verse he does *not* write. Callimachus certainly uses historical sources in the composition of the *Aetia*<sup>27</sup>. Herodotus devotes a whole book of the *Histories* to Egypt, which along with Eudoxus, Hecataeus of Abdera, and Manetho would have been among the few texts available for residents of Alexandria to read about their new country; and, significantly, the phrase occurs in a passage devoted to the topic of Egyptian song. Later in book 1, Callimachus includes his own Linus song (frs. 26, 27-28, 30, 31a Pf.), employing a phrase — ἡνεκὲς αἰίδω δειδεγμένος (fr. 26.8 Pf.) — that seems to take us back to ἐν ᾄεσμι

<sup>26</sup> *Leg.* 2, 656 d-657 b. See A.W. NIGHTINGALE's analysis of this passage, "Plato's Lawcode in Context", in *CQ* 49 (1999), 119-122.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., fr. 75.54 Pf., where Xenomedes is named as the source of the story of Acontius and Cydippe. According to the *Schol.Flor.* 35ff. on fr. 7 Pf. the historians Agias and Derkylos were Callimachus' source for Argive material (see also fr. 66 Pf.). For another possible echo of Herodotus, see the discussion of the speech of the Nile in the *Sosibius*, below.



διηγεκός of the Prologue. The Egyptian Linus song, as Herodotus notes, is a lament for an untimely death of a king's son. Commentators on the passage identify this with the ritual mourning for Osiris, who in Egyptian myth was cut into pieces by his brother<sup>28</sup>. In contrast, Greek myth gives us several Linus stories, and Callimachus' differs from the more familiar Greek version in which Linus is a musician and was killed either by Apollo in jealousy or killed by his pupil Heracles in a fit of rage<sup>29</sup>. In Callimachus, Linus is the child of Apollo and Psamathe, the daughter of the king of Argos. When she hides the baby among the shepherds to keep its birth secret from her father, he is torn apart by dogs<sup>30</sup>. I doubt Callimachus' Linus story is an example of *interpretatio Graeca*. I suspect it operates on two different levels: like Herodotus, Callimachus suggests the possibility for the same or similar songs existing in different cultures by telling a story that bears a ghostly resemblance to the Egyptian Linus song — untimely death, sparagmos, with the resulting institution of a ritual — as a way of aligning the two distinctive narrative spaces. But it also undercuts the notion of ἄεισμα ἐν by narrating a Linus song that differs substantially from the more traditional Greek version, to which Callimachus seems to allude in fr. 23.6 Pf.<sup>31</sup>

Even if some of these elements in the Prologue are accidental, the number of potential references to Egypt is very high. Moreover, it is possible to observe that the intertextual Egyptians are ranged on one side of the equation, and adhere closely to the categories of bad taste into which Callimachus has organized Greek poetry. But what exactly does it mean for him to reject the weight, length, noise, and monotony of Egypt? This cannot

<sup>28</sup> A.B. LLOYD, *Herodotus. Book II. Introduction* (Leiden 1975), 146 and *Herodotus. Book II. Commentary 1-98* (Leiden 1976), 338.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., DIOD.SIC. 3.67.2.

<sup>30</sup> PAUS. 1.43.7 and an extended passage in Statius' *Thebais* (1.557-672) give us these details.

<sup>31</sup> Where the text reads λῆ. οφ. I am indebted to A. Harder for this observation.



be understood as a rejection of Egypt itself, since the same aspects of Greek poetry are equally deplored. In creating an 'Egyptian' aesthetic to match the Greek one he condemns, he may be universalizing bad taste. More importantly, by virtue of these repeated allusions, Egypt has been insinuated into his poetic program, both explicitly as with the lines on noisy cranes and as a subtext. The dynamic of the opening, then, presents an Egypt already embedded in Greek literature, into which Callimachus will insert the new line of Macedonian pharaohs, the Ptolemies. But he also seems to assert that this 'Egypt' (like much of Greek poetry) needs to be revitalized. We should look to the new kind of poetry that he has chosen to write, examples of which are the *Victory of Berenice* and the *Victory of Sosibius*, to see how he has done this.

If we consider my second category more systematically, we see that several of Callimachus' mythological subjects in the *Aetia* (and elsewhere in his poetry) either explicitly or implicitly belong to a dynamic of Greek-Egyptian interaction. I have already discussed Helen, whom Greek myth situates in both cultures. Callimachus calls this to our attention at the opening of the *Victory of Berenice* when news of the Nemean victory is carried εἰς 'Ελένη[ς νησιῖδ]α καὶ εἰς Παλληνέα μάντ[ιν, | ποιμένα [φωκάων] (fr. 383 Pf. + SH 254.5-6). Helen's island is Pharos, situated at the mouth of the harbor of what came to be Alexandria, and long identified in Greek texts as the residence of Proteus<sup>32</sup>. The epithet 'Pallenean' may be less familiar, but from its occurrence in Lycophron, it too points to Greek and Egyptian interchange. Proteus was married to Thracian Torone and lived with her in Pallene. When their sons began to engage in lawless behavior<sup>33</sup>, Proteus petitioned his own father, Poseidon, who opened up an underwater pathway so that his son might return

<sup>32</sup> See Menelaus' recollections of Proteus, the old man of the sea, in *Odyssey* 4.354-55 and 384-94, and Euripides' *Helena* 4-5.

<sup>33</sup> They challenged strangers to wrestle with them and killed them if they lost. They themselves were later killed by Heracles (APOLLOD. 2.5.9.14).

to Egypt. 'Pallenean' should not be dismissed as Callimachus' inability to resist a *recherché* allusion<sup>34</sup>. The subterranean connection of the two spaces — one Greek, the other Egyptian — identifies an Egypt that was already present within Greek mythological consciousness, with which intercourse (of whatever kind) was long since taking place. Callimachus (seemingly) does no more than insert the Ptolemies into the context of this prior transcontinental exchange. But the notion of submerged, yet real connections serves to notify the reader that in Callimachus' own poetic practice Egypt is often present just below the surface. (Callimachus makes much of another under sea pathway between the two continents — that of the river, Inopus, on Delos, and the Nile, discussed below.)

Members of the Danaid line also appear throughout the *Aetia*. In fr. 100.4 Pf. Danaus apparently dedicated the statue of Athena at Lindos; his daughters, who discover the springs and wells of Argos, are the subjects of an *aition* in book 3<sup>35</sup>. Book 3 opens with reference to the land of 'cow-born Danaus'. Danaus and his female relatives are figures of Greek myth who have an ancient genealogical connection with Egypt. The kernel of their tale is a double migration: the Greek Io wanders to Egypt where she becomes the progenetrix of Libya, Danaus, Aegyptus, and Phoenix. Io herself, who is both woman and cow, bears a sufficiently strong resemblance to Egyptian cow-horned goddesses that she was identified with Isis as early as Herodotus, if not before<sup>36</sup>. According to the *Suda*, Callimachus wrote a poem called *The Arrival of Io*<sup>37</sup>, and in an epigram he identifies

<sup>34</sup> Th.A. SCHMITZ, "I Hate All Common Things": The Reader's Role in Callimachus' *Aetia* Prologue", in *HSCP* 99 (1999), 166, for example, cites this passage to illustrate the poet's preference for "periphrastic, recondite expressions".

<sup>35</sup> Fr. 65-66 Pf. and again in *SH* 260A.

<sup>36</sup> 2.41.2: τὸ γὰρ τῆς Ἰσίου ἄγαλμα ἐὼν γυναικίον βούκερὼν ἐστι, κατὰ περ Ἑλλήνες τὴν Ἰοῦν γράφουσι.

<sup>37</sup> D'ALESSIO, *op.cit.*, 30 suggests that a number of these poems of Callimachus recorded in the *Suda* but otherwise unknown might in fact have belonged to the *Aetia*.

Isis as the daughter of Inachos (= Io)<sup>38</sup>, thus positioning her in both cultures. In a later generation Danaus, with his daughters, returns to Argos. For Hesiod, Danaus or his daughters are the bringers of water to a thirsty Argos (δίψιον Ἄργος)<sup>39</sup>. There is more than one version of how the water is discovered, but the fact that members of this particular family are responsible for alleviating the aridity of a previously dry Argos, may have been an attempt within the context of earlier Greek myth to extend the genealogical link of Egypt and Greece to the geographical, by conforming the Argive landscape at least superficially to the behavior of the Nile. The Danaid family functions as an organizational template for the origins of various Mediterranean peoples — Io's descendants are the eponymous ancestors of Libya, Greece, Egypt, and Phoenicia. Greek Io may be figured as the ancestor of Egypt, and in turn, her descendant, Danaus may be figured as Egyptian as he returns to Greece with his daughters. However it plays out, the family genealogy was inextricably intertwined with Egypt. For the Ptolemies this link gains in importance because Danaus, whose descendants include Perseus and Heracles, is also the ancestor of the Macedonian line through Archelaus<sup>40</sup>.

Danaus' great granddaughter was Danae, the mother of Perseus, whose adventures took him to Egypt and Ethiopia<sup>41</sup>. In this connection, let us consider the tiny hexameter fr. 655 Pf. on the Egyptian persea tree: καὶ τριτάτῃ Περσῆος ἐπώνυμος, ἧς ὀρόδαμνον | Αἰγύπτῳ κατέπηξεν. The persea was well known in Ptolemaic Egypt. Persea leaves crowned the victors of the Ptolemaic festival games of the Basileia, and a tall and beautiful woman called Penteteris, wearing gold jewelry and carrying a crown of persea leaves and a palm branch, was a prominent

<sup>38</sup> *Epigr.* 57.1Pf. = *Anthol. Pal.* 6.150: Ἰναχίδης ἔσθηκεν ἐν Ἰσίδος ἢ Θαλέω παῖς | Αἰσχυλὶς Εἰρήνης ματρός ὑποσχασίῃ.

<sup>39</sup> Fr. 128 M.-W., and see *APOLLOD.* 2.1.4.6-7.

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., the prologue to Euripides' *Archelaus*. I am indebted to A. Harder for this observation.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. *HDT.* 2.91.



participant in the procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus<sup>42</sup>. So far, this looks Greek. Callimachus could easily be referring to these events, perhaps providing an *aition* to account for this use persea leaves. However, the persea tree also plays an important role in Egyptian mythology. The goddess Seshat, who measured time, was prominent in the royal festival of renewal, carrying the palm and leaves of the persea tree on which the years of the king's reign were inscribed<sup>43</sup>. (It would be exceeding the limits of coincidence if this were not the proximate cause for Penteris carrying these accoutrements in the Ptolemaia.) The persea was planted in temple precincts, and its breast-shaped fruits are often shown nourishing the king. The tree itself could be imagined as a goddess and represented with arms. Callimachus appropriates this tree, with its weight of Egyptian religious signification, and gives it a Greek pedigree, thus hellenizing it even in its native Egyptian environment. According to Callimachus, it is a Greek, Perseus, who not only brings the tree to Egypt, but on whom it depends for its name.

But to return to 'cowborn Danaus'. The epithet 'cowborn' is carefully calculated to link Greeks to Egyptians in hereditary terms. A few lines later, Callimachus describes Egyptian women as "knowing how to mourn the bull with the white marking"<sup>44</sup>. This refers to the thoroughly Egyptian cult of the Apis bull. The Apis was a specially marked bull, who was worshipped as the incarnate manifestation of Osiris. His death, like that of Osiris, was a time of great ritual lamentation throughout Egypt<sup>45</sup>. Callimachus' reference to this event, I would argue, functions to reposition the alien cult object — the Apis — in

<sup>42</sup> ATHEN. 5.198b, and PFEIFFER's notes *ad loc.*

<sup>43</sup> W. HELCK, *Lexikon für Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden 1984-present), vol. 5, 884-8, and M.-L. BUHL, "The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult", in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6 (1947), 89. In Egyptian the tree is the *isd*. I am indebted to Robert Ritner of the Oriental Institute in Chicago for this information.

<sup>44</sup> Fr. 383.16 Pf. + SH 254.16 (30): εἰδ[υῖ]αι φαλιδὸν τ[α]ῦρον ἡλεμισαί.

<sup>45</sup> For Apis and Osiris, see Ph. BORGEAUD — Y. VOLOKHINE, "La formation de la légende de Sarapis: une approche transculturelle", in *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 2 (2000), 37-76. Tibullus makes the point explicit in his imitation of



terms of the familiar Greek myth. Since we have just been reminded of the descendants of Io, Apis, whom the Greeks identified with Io's son Epaphus<sup>46</sup>, too begins to lose his otherness and to be incorporated into the allusive matrix of what has become an extended Greco-Egyptian mythological family. This technique of allusion to an Egypt already embedded in Greek consciousness is a central means by which Callimachus creates a discursive field that can serve to accommodate an Egyptian cultural logic. By moving the reader from the Greek cowborn descendant of Io (Danaus) to the Egyptian (Apis), Callimachus occludes the differences and draws the unknown into the comfortable orbit of Greek myth.

The inclusion of incidents from the adventures of the Argonauts, I think, fulfils a function similar to that of the Danaids, in so far as they belong to a narrative of Greek colonization of North Africa that serves to establish a prior Greek mythological claim to this region. Pindar's *Pythian* 4, written for Arcesilaus of Cyrene, to commemorate his victory in the chariot-race at the Pythian games in 462 BC, embeds the tale of Jason and the Argonauts in the history of the imperial house. The link between this contemporary political frame and the myth of the search for the golden fleece is the figure of Euphemus. He was a member of the crew of the Argo, but he was also the ancestor of the Battiads of Cyrene. In Pindar's account, Euphemus is given a clod of Libyan soil by Triton (in human guise) as a guest gift, which is a token of his descendants' claim, in the future, to this region of North Africa (19-40). The entire adventure of the Argonauts unfolds as an *aition*, the specific rhetoric of which is the manifest destiny of this clod of Libyan earth, even when, or especially when, the human instruments do not understand the process. Pindar's poem moves from a moment shrouded in the mists of the past (the time of the guest-gift of the clod) to

this line: *te* (sc. the Nile) *canit atque suum pubes miratur Osirim | barbara, Memphiten plangere docta bovem* (1.7.27-28).

<sup>46</sup> HDT. 2.153: ὁ δὲ Ἄπις κατὰ τὴν Ἑλλάγην γλῶσσαν ἐστὶ Ἐπαφος.

the island of Lemnos where the Argonauts plant the fertile Lemnian women with the seed of future heroes<sup>47</sup>, who will migrate to Thera. On Thera Medea prophesies about these future events and the clod that will eventually wash up on this island. From Thera Battus, on the instructions of Apollo, sets out for Libya. The foregrounding of Apollo the 'Gleamer', Anaphe, and Spartan Thera at the opening of the *Aetia* (fr. 7.23-24 Pf.) similarly positions Callimachus' Argo story *vis-à-vis* this colonizing myth. It provides a mythological beginning to his narrative, which will subsequently include (among others) *aitia* associated with Danaus and his descendants, especially Heracles, to achieve its manifest destiny in the contemporary world with the Ptolemies. Apollonius ends his epic at these same locations — Anaphe and Thera (4.1740-81) — where, to reinforce their importance for the (future) Greek colonization of Libya, he includes an incident in which Euphemus dreams of the clod in language (4.1734: δαιμονίη βῶλαξ) that recalls the βῶλακα δαιμονίην of Pindar's narrative (37)<sup>48</sup>.

An additional feature of the adventure of the Argonauts is that Colchians were identified as the descendants of Egyptians, from the dim period of antiquity when an Egyptian king, Sesostris, conquered the eastern Mediterranean and left veterans to settle in that isolated region. Herodotus is our earliest source for this, but it seems to have been a commonplace in the Hellenistic period<sup>49</sup>. Apollonius acknowledges the connection in

<sup>47</sup> The language is adapted from *Pythian* 4.255-7.

<sup>48</sup> See my discussion of the significance of these events for the end of the *Argonautica* in "Writing Epic in the Ptolemaic Court", in *Hellenistica Groningana* 4 (2000), 195-215. See also, above HARDER, 217-223. Euphemus dreams that he is lactating and nursing the clod as if a child. The clod announces that she is the daughter of Triton and Libya, the land destined for his descendants (4.1731-45). To this compare the discussion of the lactating Nile below.

<sup>49</sup> HDT. 3.103-5. In his ethnographic argument Herodotus says that both cultures practice circumcision, that their techniques of weaving are the same, as is their entire lifestyle (2.105). See also, Hecataeus of Abdera (*FGrHist* 264 F 25.28.2 = DIOD.SIC. 1.28.2) and Lycophron 1312: [Jason] ὃς εἰς Κύτταιαν τὴν Λιβυστικὴν μολών.

*Argonautica*, 4.271-8, as does Callimachus in the opening of *Aetia*, book 3 (fr. 383 Pf. + *SH* 254.12-6), where Colchian and Egyptian women are linked in techniques of weaving:

καὶ πάρος Ἀργεῖ[  
 καιρωτοὺς τε[  
 Κολχίδες ἢ Νείλω[ι  
 λεπταλέους ἔζυσαν .[  
 εἰδ[υῖ]αι φαλιδὸν τ[α]ῦ[ρον] ἡλεμίσαι]

The precise point here is lost in the lacuna. Parsons suggests "Callimachus may intend a simple parallel: formerly an Egyptian king (Danaus) ruled in Argos; now an Egyptian queen triumphs in the Argive games"<sup>50</sup>. Richard Thomas proposes a comparison between the weaving of Argive women for Hera and Colchian or Egyptian women<sup>51</sup>, and would implicate fr. 66 Pf., in which "the women who were to weave the holy robe for Hera" first pour the waters of the Amydone on their heads (3-5). Fr. 66 Pf., in fact, contextualizes the weaving of the robe for Hera in terms of Io and the four daughters of Danaus who were the discoverers of the Argive wells or springs. Thus, the cluster of weaving women — Argive, Colchian, and Egyptian — should all be related. Egypt provides an ancestor for both, the Greek mythological Io for the Argive heroines, soldiers of the Egyptian king, Sesostris of Greek legend, for the Colchians. It is difficult to carry the argument further, though the three related groups in the context of the opening evocation of Danaus, Apis, and Io, are all apparently characterized by the subtlety of their weaving, which is often a metaphor for poetic composition<sup>52</sup>.

Frr. 44, 45 Pf., *SH* 252 (+ frr. 46-47 Pf.) give us another Egyptian, Busiris, who also descends from Io and Epaphus<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> P. PARSONS, "Callimachus: Victoria Berenices", in *ZPE* 25 (1977), 10.

<sup>51</sup> R.F. THOMAS, "Callimachus, the *Victoria Berenices*, and Roman Poetry", in *CQ* 33 (1983), 107.

<sup>52</sup> A. Harder makes the attractive suggestion that the three might constitute a priamel as a foil for the poet's own composition, viz., women in Argos, etc. wove beautiful garments, but I wove this poem.

<sup>53</sup> According to Apollodorus, he was the grandson of Epaphus (2.5.11.6).



We have only a few lines from this *aition*, which seems to have been imitated by Ovid. In Ovid the story is briefly told and, along with that of Phalaris, intended to provide two examples of those who are caught in a web of their own design:

*dicitur Aegyptos caruisse iuvantibus arva  
imbribus atque annos sicca fuisse novem,  
cum Thrasius Busirin adit monstratque piari  
hospitis adfuso sanguine posse Iovem.  
illi Busiris 'fies Iovis hostia primus'  
inquit 'et Aegypto tu dabis hospes aquam.'* (Ars 1.647-52).

There are two points to note here: to judge from Ovid, Callimachus' version does not relate the familiar story of Heracles, one of Busiris' potential victims, who is portrayed on many Athenian vases as killing the king and putting his retenue to flight. Rather we have the prequel in which Busiris secures the prosperity of Egypt by propitiating the god with a human sacrifice in order to reverse the ravages of nine years of drought<sup>54</sup>. The absence of Heracles from a story to which he provides the expected *dénouement*, coupled with the presence of Heracles in many other episodes of the *Aetia*, including the slaying of the Nemean lion in book 3, may function for the reader as a reminder of what is not there — especially since Heracles was a publicly cultivated ancestor of the Ptolemies, who had good Egyptian credentials by virtue of his slaying of this particular tyrant.

But there could be more to the coupling of Busiris and Phalaris than we learn from Ovid. Two writers knowledgeable about Egypt — Herodotus and Diodorus — reject the story of Busiris sacrificing strangers. The latter makes the historically accurate claim that 'Busiris' was not the name of a person but of the burial place of Osiris (= Abusir). In a passage generally thought to be from Hecataeus of Abdera's *Aegyptiaca*, written under Soter, Diodorus provides the following explanation for the Apis bull: "Some say that when Osiris was killed by Typhon,

<sup>54</sup> Compare fr. 44 Pf.: Αἴγυπτος προπάροισεν ἐπ' ἑννέα κάρφετο πόδας.



Isis gathered up his body parts and placed them in a βούν ξυλίνην, wrapped with fine linen (βυσσίνα), and for this reason the city was named Bousiris"<sup>55</sup>. The hollow wooden sarcophagus of the Apis, whether of a bull or cow (as Diodorus has it), was a familiar feature of Osirian ritual<sup>56</sup>. The point is not that Callimachus would have told this story, but that the hollow bronze bull of Phalaris, in proximity to a figure that is connected to a hollow wooden bull, would allow the knowledgeable reader to recall the double and contested tradition for Busiris — as an Egyptian tyrant slain by Heracles, as a manifestation of the dead Osiris<sup>57</sup>.

My third category is the location of contemporary Egyptians throughout the text. The Ptolemies figure in a number of places: Berenice opens book 3 and Berenice and her husband, Euergetes, close book 4. If D'Alessio is right, another Ptolemy could have appeared at the opening of book 4. A scholion suggests that Arsinoe was the tenth Muse in the earlier books<sup>58</sup>. The inclusion of even the non-royal Pollis, the Athenian transplanted to Alexandria, suggests that Callimachus frequently reinforced the impression of a contemporary Egyptian context. Moreover, when Callimachus introduces Berenice at the opening of book 3, he identifies her by the peculiarly Egyptian custom of brother-sister marriage: κα[σιγνή]των ἱερὸν αἶμα θεῶν (fr. 383 Pf. + *SH* 254.2)<sup>59</sup>. The significance of this should not be overestimated.

<sup>55</sup> *FGrHist* 264 F 25.85.5 = *DIOD.SIC.* 1.85.5. *STEPH. BYZ.* s.v. Βούσιρις has the same information.

<sup>56</sup> See A. BURTON, *Diodorus Siculus. Book I. A Commentary* (Leiden 1972), 246-7.

<sup>57</sup> *HDT.* 2.45 and *DIOD.SIC.* 1.88.4-6.

<sup>58</sup> Fr. 2a.5-15 Pf., *Addenda*, II p.102, and see CAMERON, *op.cit.*, 141-2. Note also that Callimachus wrote a poem on the marriage of Arsinoe (fr. 392 Pf.). Only one line survives, but if elegiac, it might have appeared in the *Aetia*. See D'ALESSIO, *op.cit.*, 694-5.

<sup>59</sup> See T. GELZER, "Kallimachos und das Zeremonielle des ptolemäischen Königshauses", in *Aspekte der Kultursoziologie. Aufsätze zur Soziologie, Philosophie, Anthropologie und Geschichte der Kultur. Zum 60. Geburtstag von Mohammed Rassem*, hrsg. von J. STAGL (Berlin 1982), 13-30, esp.16-8.

To insist upon this is to locate Berenice within an Egyptian tradition that had been embraced by her predecessors, Philadelphus and Arsinoe II. Callimachus' poetics, as adumbrated in the Prologue, therefore, is not geographically untethered. It is not an abstract panhellenic aesthetics. While it (apparently) takes its inspiration from Greek poetics of Hesiod, it is seen to operate throughout the *Aetia* as locally inspired in Egypt. Within this framework, Callimachus inserts native Egyptian ideas like the Apis or practices like brother-sister marriage into Greek texts where they begin to take on a semblance of familiarity.

I wish to turn to the *Victory of Sosibius* (fr. 384 Pf.) for my final observations. Our understanding of this poem has been much advanced by Therese Fuhrer's study contextualizing it in terms of choral lyric<sup>60</sup>, and the Egyptian elements I want to discuss are particularly appropriate to this encomiastic frame<sup>61</sup>. Sosibius was apparently a native Alexandrian who had during the course of his life won a series of athletic victories that ranged from the *diaulos* as a child in the Ptolemaia or the Basileia, to wrestling in the Panathenaia, to the twin chariot victories in the Nemean and Isthmian games that the poem's opening celebrates. Like the *Victory of Berenice*, the *Sosibius* opens by evoking the bicontinental aspect of the victor and the events, and the poem itself explicitly operates within a framework of geographical doubleness: the Isthmian victory is won with Asbystian horses; Poseidon is paired with the Nile, the Panathenaia with the Ptolemaic festival; the putative auditors in Alexandria and on the banks of the Kinyps immediately follow the two children whose deaths the Isthmian and Nemean games commemorate; dedications in the Argive Heraion seem to be supplanted by that at Pelusium.

<sup>60</sup> Th. FUHRER, *Die Auseinandersetzung mit den Chorlyrikern in den Epinikien des Kallimachos*, Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 23 (Basel 1992), 139-204.

<sup>61</sup> Note that KOENEN 1993, 84 already claimed for the *Hymn to Delos* that "the old Pindaric vision of unity of government and music reappears in a new poetic and social context".

Let us consider a few details more closely. Callimachus begins with 'Asbystian' horses<sup>62</sup> and a little later lactating nurses (Hypsipyle) and nurturing landscapes (the Nile), images that also figure in opening of *Pythian* 4. In that poem, Libya is described as "a white breast" (line 8: ἀργινόεντι μαστῶ), the nurturer of future Greek heroes. Then Medea prophesies that the destined colonizers of Libya will be known for "chariot teams of storm-footed horses" (17-18). At lines 25-26: ἀμφοτέρω παρὰ παιδί, κασιγνήτῳ τε Λεάρχου | καὶ τὸ Μυριναῖον τῷ γάλα θησαμένῳ, Callimachus identifies the games of the twin victories in a way that locates us in the myth of the Argonauts. The brother of Learchos was Melicertes, whose mother Ino plotted against her stepchildren, Phrixus and Helle, setting off the chain of events that led to the expedition to Colchis and, through Euphemus, ultimately to the settlement of Cyrene. "The Murinian milk" refers to Lemnian Hypsipyle. It was in Lemnos that the heroes sowed the seeds of the descendants who return to colonize North Africa. Whether or not Callimachus is deliberately recalling Pindar, he is recalling the myth of the colonization of Libya. Thus, we are reminded that the recipients of news of Sosibius' victory, who are imagined as ranging from Alexandria to the Kinyps in the west, or over the whole of Greek-colonized North Africa, are also the descendants of Pindar's Greek heroes.

This is the North Africa of Greek imagining. But into this picture, Callimachus introduces a set of motifs that, while tightly joined to similar Greek ideas, also functions to invoke Egyptian. In lines 26-27 the Nile is described thus: θηλύτατον καὶ Νεῖλῳ[ς ἄ]γων ἐνιαύσιον ὕδωρ, and he addresses Sosibius as θρεπτός. Θηλύτατον and θρεπτός help to construct the god's image — 'nourishing', but also female, and 'nursling', not in the vague sense of child, but as one nourished at a breast, like

<sup>62</sup> 'Asbystian' like 'Libyan' seems to have been geographically rather fluid. The epithet is used in the *Hymn to Apollo* 75-76, where the subject is the foundation of Cyrene, but in Lycophron *Alex.* 848 = ῥεῖθρον Ἀσβύσταο is the Nile, the context Menelaus and Helen.



the child who suckles at the breast of Hypsipyle in the line that immediately precedes. The image created here, I submit, is of the Egyptian Nile god, Hapy, who was portrayed as male but with pendulous breasts. A colossal statue of Hapy was recently discovered in the now submerged city identified as Heracleion-Thonis on Aboukir bay, approximately 15 miles to the east of Alexandria. Since the Canopic mouth of the Nile emptied into this bay, it was an obvious location for the god's statue. The site can be dated to Saite and Ptolemaic periods, thus providing a good example of the ways in which Egyptian divinities adorned the landscape and what would have been familiar to Greeks resident in Egypt.

As the passage continues, the Nile expresses his delight at his 'nursling's' victory in this way in lines 31-34:

κ]αί πουλύς, ὃν οὐδ' ὅθεν οἴϊδεν ὁδεύω  
 θνητὸς ἄνθρωπος, ἐνὶ γούν τῷδ' ἔα λιτότερος  
 κε[ίνω]ν, οὓς ἀμογήτῃ διὰ σφυρὰ λευκὰ γυναικῶν  
 κ[αὶ πα]ῖς ἀβρέκτω γούνατι πεζὸς ἔβη.

The Nile begins by referring to the fact that no mortal knows his source. The source of the Nile was, of course, much debated by Greeks<sup>63</sup>, but the hiddenness of the Nile was equally an important trope in Egyptian texts. A famous Nile hymn, for example, proclaims: "Come to nourish Egypt! | Of secret ways" and somewhat later: "No one knows the place he's in, | His cavern is not found in books"<sup>64</sup>.

Then there is the Nile's characterization of other rivers. This resembles rather closely a passage of Herodotus — Cyrus' angry speech to the Babylonian river, Gyndes, after one of his horses is drowned in its torrents. Cyrus threatens that "he will make him so weak that in future even women would easily ford him

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., HDT. 2.28.

<sup>64</sup> M. LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Literature. A Book of Readings*. Vol. 1: *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1973), 205, 207, and compare the search for the hidden recesses of the Nile in Famine stele from the Ptolemaic period, Vol. 3: *The Late Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980), 96-7.

without wetting their knees"<sup>65</sup>. If the Nile is appropriating Cyrus' boastful language, he is also speaking ironically, since his remark reproduces a trope found in Egyptian literature to describe a low Nile, namely, the insultingly easy means of crossing. The following passage, for example, comes from the *Prophecies of Neferti*: "Dry is the river of Egypt | One crosses the water on foot; | One seeks water for ships to sail on, | Its course having been turned into shoreland"<sup>66</sup>, or again in *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*: "Is crossing the river in sandals a good crossing? No!"<sup>67</sup> The Nile's speech, I suspect, is meant to conjure up an authentically Egyptian Nile, who utters Egyptian sentiments, but a Nile who is simultaneously conversant with Greek texts. In this way Callimachus reverses the allusive direction of lines 25-26, which if prodded deeply enough reveal a Greek myth that defines Ptolemaic North Africa. In the speech of the Nile, Callimachus recasts other rivers in Egyptian terms. This is not the only place in Callimachus where this happens<sup>68</sup>. The river Inopus is described as Egyptian in *Hymn to Artemis* 171: ἀγχόθι πηγᾶων Αἰγυπτίου Ἰνωποῖο, an allusion that is clearer in *Hymn to Delos* 206-8:

ἔζετο δ' Ἰνωποῖο παρὰ ῥόον ὃν τε βάθιστον  
γαῖα τότ' ἐξανίησιν, ὅτε πλήθοντι ῥέεθρῳ  
Νεῖλος ἀπὸ κρημνοῖο κατέρχεται Αἰθιοπῆος<sup>69</sup>.

Koenen and Bing have already noted the significance of the passage<sup>70</sup>. Callimachus arranges the birth of Apollo on Delos to

<sup>65</sup> HDT. 1.189. Cyrus goes on to break up the force of the river by diverting it into 180 channels. Similar language is found in Xenophon *Anab.* 3.2.22, but that may not be independent of Herodotus. It is also possible that this was a common expression in Greek for shallow rivers.

<sup>66</sup> LICHTHEIM 1973, 141.

<sup>67</sup> LICHTHEIM 1973, 177 (l. 200).

<sup>68</sup> In the *Hymn to Zeus*, also, Callimachus describes the condition of Arcadia, which is dry before Zeus' birth, in terms similar to the Nile's deprecation of other rivers: "the Melas carried many wagons on its surface... and a man walked on foot over the Crathis" (lines 23-27), where I have argued we are meant to draw a parallel with the Nile (STEPHENS 1998, 177).

<sup>69</sup> See also line 263 and Lycophron *Alex.* 575 for the same idea.

<sup>70</sup> KOENEN 1983, 175; BING, *op.cit.*, 136-8.

occur precisely at the time when the Inopus, which has a subterranean connection with the Nile, begins to swell. By this device, the birth of Apollo is inserted into the same frame of reference as the Egyptian god, Horus, whose birth occurred at the beginning of the inundation, and with whom Apollo was identified.

I believe the final section of the poem (53-56) includes the same gesture again interwoven with traditional epinician sentiments:

καὶ τὸν ἐφ' οὗ νίκαισιν αἰείδομεν, ἄρθμια δῆμῳ  
εἰδότα καὶ μικρῶν οὐκ ἐπιληθόμενον,  
παύριστον τό κεν ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀφνειῷ τις ἴδοιτο  
ᾧ τινι μὴ κρεῖ[ι]σσων ἧ νόος εὐτυχίης·

Fuhrer and D'Alessio have pointed to several parallels from Pindar,<sup>71</sup> which include Hieron's mildness towards the demos, a mind above wealth, and measured praise. But there are subtle differences in Callimachus. He is not praising a king, so the parallel with Hieron is not exact. Also, epinician focuses on the proper use of wealth to discourage hybriatic behavior in the victor and to ease his reintegration into his community. It is not interested in charity or good works. The opposite is true in an Egyptian context. Care for the poor, explicitly articulated, is an essential component of the prolific Egyptian genre of instruction or wisdom literature, elements from which were frequently incorporated into dedicatory inscriptions that catalogued the virtues of the dead man. A few examples from the late hieroglyphic inscriptions will make the point clear. The commemorative stele of Udjahorresne, erected in the time of Darius I, states: "I am a man who is very good in his town ... I defended the weak against the strong. I rescued the timid man when misfortune came to him"<sup>72</sup>. Another Late Period autobiography claims: "The people reckoned me as openhanded, | For I despised the piling up of riches"<sup>73</sup>. Finally, the autobiographical

<sup>71</sup> FUHRER, *op.cit.*, 201; D'ALESSIO, *op.cit.*, 689 n.26.

<sup>72</sup> LICHTHEIM 1980, 39 (ll. 33-7).

<sup>73</sup> LICHTHEIM 1980, 15.



inscription of Wennofer, who served under Soter, praises him as follows:

"I was praised in my own town, | Beneficent in his nome, | Gracious to everyone. | I was well-disposed, popular, | Widely loved, cheerful. ... I was a good shelter for the needy | One on whom every man could lean"<sup>74</sup>.

Callimachus' emphasis in his hymn on friendliness towards the people and not overlooking the poor man, I suspect, is meant to reflect these standard elements of Egyptian autobiography.

Finally, there are a number of features of the *Victory of Sosibius* that do not comfortably fit the epinician frame: there is no myth (unless we count the Indian ants); the hymnic address to Poseidon can be paralleled, but is not common; there is a speaking part for the Nile and perhaps also for Sosibius; and the poem commemorates all of Sosibius' athletic achievements (and dedications?) even while it ostensibly celebrates a specific victory. Many of these features could be accounted for if Callimachus was incorporating elements of Egyptian praise texts — particularly the autobiographical inscription — into Greek epinician. In texts like the commemorative stele for Wennofer the subject usually speaks, reciting his own accomplishments, and hymn-like addresses to relevant deities are not unusual. Wennofer's biographical inscription, for example, begins by praising Osiris and ends with a speech placed in the mouth of the god, Atum, who praises Wennofer<sup>75</sup>. The parallels are not exact — any more than they are to a traditional Greek epinician — but the overall effect would be of blending compatible parts not straightforward imitation. In terms of Greek epinician, Callimachus' inclusion of native Egyptian elements would make good sense. Pindar, too, customized his victory odes, selecting appropriate local myths as part of the broad canvass on which he paints the symbolic significance of victory. As a native Cyrenean,

<sup>74</sup> LICHTHEIM 1980, 55.

<sup>75</sup> LICHTHEIM 1980, 55-7.

Callimachus would have learned this lesson easily: Pindar's Cyrenean epinicia recount Apollo's conquest of the nymph Cyrene (*Pythian* 9); the adventures of the Argonauts, in which the ancestor of Cyrene, Euphemus, participates (*Pythian* 4), and Battus's foundation of the city (*Pythian* 5). For Sosibius, Callimachus seems to have customized the epinician for time and place, by selecting elements to bind Greek and Egyptian together, elements recognizable as deriving from each discrete culture, but which are nonetheless capable of complementing each other. Further, just as we saw with the *Aetia*, the momentum of the poem would seem to move from an Egypt and North Africa of Greek myth, possibly through allusion to a mediating text like *Pythian* 4, to end with an authentically Egyptian expression for this native son.

What do these readings mean for a broader understanding of Callimachus' poetry? Certainly, they suggest an extensive range of intertextual Egypts from obvious allusions like "Helen's island", to the more complex like "Pallenean prophet", to Egyptian practices like Apis bull worship, than is usually presupposed. They also suggest a poetics not only dependent on previous Greek poetic antecedents, but one that deliberately incorporated forms and story patterns from traditional elements of Egyptian culture. Beliefs like the catasterism of the soul after death or the tropes used in the speech of the Nile were likely to have been familiar to the local Greek populations of Egypt, but would not have belonged to their inherited Greek literary traditions. On one level Callimachus' behavior can be read as *aemulatio* — as the incorporation of something new as a part of a necessary rivalry with the poetry of the past. More fundamentally, it undercuts the notion that Callimachus' poetry is deliberately obscure and almost random in his use of allusions, or that he has recourse to shards of the literary past for no other purpose than to alleviate the barrenness of the literary present. On the contrary, his allusive strategies are both coherent and consistent: in order to integrate the new Egyptian world into the Greek mythic past Callimachus can be seen devising a flexible idiom

in which to praise the Ptolemaic court, which straddled Greek and Egyptian symbolic spaces. It also served to domesticate the unfamiliar world of Egypt in which immigrant Greeks found themselves.



## DISCUSSION

*Th. Fuhrer:* What does 'Egyptian' mean? Are we to think of the hellenized notion of it? Isn't your idea of 'doubleness' really only from one direction? Would, then, an Egyptologist say that these examples are not really Egyptian?

*S. Stephens:* Certainly, the mythological framework of Callimachus' poetry is a hellenized notion of Egypt. Figures like Danaus and Busiris are not Egyptian nor do they have any close parallels in native Egyptian myth. But, other elements of Callimachus' poetry — Apis cult or the Nile god, Hapy — belong to native belief and would be so recognized by any Egyptologist. That said, Callimachus does construct both Greek and 'Egyptian' parts of his narrative, so you are right that the 'doubleness' is from one direction. With respect to Egyptologists: they are not particularly concerned with Greek poetry for their own understanding of late Egyptian culture. However, several with whom I have discussed these ideas have been quite receptive. I can point by way of example to the information about the relationship of the persea and the Ptolemaia, which came from an Egyptologist (as noted above).

*P.J. Parsons:* Is it desirable to distinguish sharply between 'real' Egypt and the constructed Egypt which descends from Herodotus and would be called 'orientalist' by Said?

*S. Stephens:* I don't think one can. From the point of view of post-colonial discourse, which is where Said's *Orientalism* should be situated, all western attempts to write about or position cultures that fall outside of the west are necessarily 'orientalizing', so if we take Greek as western and Egypt as oriental, then Callimachus no less than Herodotus is orientalizing. Within that

discourse, though, both Herodotus and Callimachus demonstrate knowledge of genuinely Egyptian ideas. While it is true that Herodotus constructs Egypt as the polar opposite of Greece, and Callimachus appears to proceed by analogy and to blur distinctions between Greek ideas of Egypt and native practices that exist and have histories outside of Greek culture, both habits of mind are essentially Greek ways of appropriating Egypt, which is a distinctly non-Greek space.

*L. Lehnus:* I wonder whether you should say more about the Athenian Pollis “reinforcing the interpretation of a contemporary Egyptian context” — which is not completely clear to me. Callimachus went to Egypt, but (may I ask) how deeply did he get in touch with the country (which is perhaps not to be identified *tout court* with Alexandria)? He was not simply the foreign conqueror, but he does not seem to me comparable to a, say, Hecataeus of Abdera, with his openly ethnological interest.

*S. Stephens:* It is interesting that Callimachus himself describes Pollis not as residing in Alexandria, which is what we all assume, but in Egypt (fr. 178.6 Pf.). We tend to make a sharp distinction between Cyrene and, later, Alexandria, which we consider ‘really’ Greek, and Egypt proper or the *chora*, but I am not sure that is correct. Cyrene was, after all, a city in North Africa, in which assimilated cults like that of Isis and dedications to Horus-Apollo were already in evidence in the fourth century BC. And Libyan Ammon was the ram-headed divinity of Egyptian Thebes, who was only partially assimilated to Zeus by Greeks. And if the discoveries in the harbor are any indication, the city of Alexandria from its foundation would have had a strongly Egyptian visual dimension with its imported sphinxes, obelisks, and colossal statues, many of which would have been inscribed in hieroglyphics. And we know of an Isis temple built there very early, as well as the inclusion of Isis and Horus in the cult of Sarapis.

As to whether Callimachus would have had the same interests as a Hecataeus, I think the very fact that Hecataeus wrote

under Soter and was familiar with Egyptian monuments outside of Alexandria (as was Callimachus) creates a very high *a priori* expectation that under the early Ptolemies there was strong interest in the native culture. It is important to remember that Soter began his rule in Memphis, the religious capital of old Egypt and that all of the early surviving Ptolemaic inscriptions are in hieroglyphics, they are not bilingual. The usual assumption has been that after moving to Alexandria, the Ptolemies withdrew from interest in or cultivation of the native practices, but the introduction of brother-sister marriage under Ptolemy II runs counter to this assumption. If we adjust for the differences in genre and vagaries of transmission, I suspect Hecataeus and Callimachus often see the same things and react to them in similar ways.

*R. Hunter:* Do you think that your reading of the *Victory of Sosibius* can help with the problem of its date, or (to put it another way) would you feel any happier with your reading if we knew whether the poem belonged to the early or later part of Callimachus' career?

*S. Stephens:* This is a slippery slope. It is possible to adduce evidence in support of either date: the way that Callimachus characterizes the Nile is an element that I think also appears in the *Hymn to Zeus*, which is quite early. The geographical movement from Greece to North Africa and Egypt is an element shared with the *Victory for Berenice*, which is quite late. I am still struggling to construct persuasive arguments for a 'real' Egyptian presence in Callimachus' poetry and would not like to complicate it by attempting to construct a chronology of his Egyptianizing.

*R. Hunter:* My impression is that one of the problems for classicists who are unfamiliar with the Egyptian material and who must rely on translations and the interpretations of others is the (presumably unconscious) temptation to treat ancient Egypt as a time-free zone, so that a text of, say, 2000 BC can



shed as much light on Callimachus as one of, say, 250 BC. Clearly it is the case — or seems to a non-expert, such as myself — that Egyptian documents are characterized by repetition of style and subject over many centuries, but it is also the case that if the Greek and Egyptian material is to be put together in an enlightening way, then change over time in *both* cultures must be respected.

*S. Stephens:* Yes, I think your point is quite valid. There is a strong temptation when constructing a set of parallels between Greek and Egyptian stories or ideas to forget that most readers are not able to distinguish those elements of cultivated sameness — the pharaonic motif of ‘smiting the foe’, for example, is virtually unchanged in pictorial representation for three millennia — from elements that may have altered substantially over time. Classicists themselves, however, are guilty of the same habit. They regularly use data from Roman Egypt to make assertions about Ptolemaic practice, particularly in discussions of complex subjects like ‘ethnicity’, even though the Roman experience of Egypt, particularly after Cleopatra, would have been considerably different from that of Callimachus.

*P.J. Parsons:* Would it be useful to indicate briefly who might know what about Egyptian realities? E.g., we can’t decide whether Ptolemy II really saw himself as pharaoh (as opposed to doing acts or authorizing buildings which would make him look like a pharaoh to the native Egyptians); we can ask what sorts of Egyptian ritual he and his court might have participated in.

*S. Stephens:* To state the obvious, Callimachus must have been familiar with at least one Egyptian cult, that of the lamentation for the Apis. Since mourning for the Apis took place all over Egypt, it suggests either these rituals also took place in Alexandria or that Callimachus had travelled outside of Alexandria (or both). Also, since Apis worship is linked to kingship — witness Alexander’s worship of the Apis in Memphis — we might infer

that there was at least some Ptolemaic activity *vis-à-vis* the Apis. We do not have much concrete evidence but what we do have suggests that the Ptolemies were present for temple dedications and for important rituals throughout the year. We do know that shortly after his accession Philadelphus visited a number of Egyptian sanctuaries, that he was present at the dedication of a temple in the Delta (279 BC, according to the Pithom stele), that he attended the dedication of the cult of the ram god, Banebdjedet, in Mendes (264 BC), and that at the end of the second Syrian war he travelled to Memphis where he acted as pharaoh and performed the usual sacrifices to the gods. These events must have been complex to stage, so at a minimum the members of the royal entourage and, therefore, anyone in Alexandria who had connections with this entourage, would have been aware of them. Since festivals that celebrated events in the story of Isis and Osiris were seen by Herodotus in various parts of Egypt, and there was an Isis temple in the native style within Alexandria, many Egyptian rites were probably staged within the city itself. Finally, there is the strong possibility that festivals like the Basileia and the Ptolemaia coopted Egyptian elements, like the perseae leaves, in order to appeal to the entire populace, in a way analogous to the introduction of the Sarapis cult.

*L. Lehnus:* How rewarding your approach can be is clearly shown by the solution you propose for the Busiris fragment (*Aetia* II), which is more perfectly understood in its linkage with Phalaris. All the same, I deem your treatment of the Sosibius poem not only to be convincing in itself, but also to provide (so I feel) further evidence for a later (and more Egyptian) date.

*S. Stephens:* Thank you.

*R. Hunter:* I wonder whether Diodorus 1.85.5 (p.254 above) sheds any light on the apparent reference to "fine garments" woven by women "who lament Apis" in the opening of the *Victory of Berenice*?

*S. Stephens:* It does seem a potentially fruitful line of thought.

*Th. Fuhrer:* Your suggestion that Callimachus' notion of an ἄλυσμα ἐν might come from the Herodotean passage on the song of Linus seems to me to point to an interesting way of interpretation, although I don't think it's necessary to assume a direct allusion to Hdt. 2.79. Knowing Herodotus', Plato's, and certainly others' comments on Egyptian songs and/or poetry surely also the Alexandrian scholars and scholar poets made up their minds about their country's (i.e., Egypt's) poetical production. The images of the Persian chain and the ass seem to suggest that Egyptian standards were not considered to be sufficient, but served — among other metaphors — as a negative foil for the highly refined Callimachean ideal.

*S. Stephens:* Yes, I take your point.

*P.J. Parsons:* Would it be worth asking whether Callimachus' treatment of things Egyptian is different in kind from Pindar's treatment of Sicily (also linked by an underground river to old Greece) and Cyrene (emphasis on foundation)? Are they both concerned to draw a society on the periphery into a presumed old Greek geographic/mythical centre?

*S. Stephens:* In many respects Callimachus' treatment of Egypt is very like Pindar's poetic habit. I hadn't thought of it before, but upon reflection, it looks as if the opening of *Nemean* 1, with its underground river (Alpheus) surfacing on the island of Ortygia in the Syracusan harbor is being imitated by Callimachus when he writes of "Helen's isle" and alludes to the subterranean passage that brought Proteus back to Egypt at the opening of the (Nemean) *Victory for Berenice*. In both, I think, we can see the poets capitalizing on what must have been pre-existing local attempts to draw the periphery into, as you say, an old Greek geographic/mythical centre. But the link between the Inopus and the Nile operates quite differently. Here, Callimachus



assimilates or perhaps even redefines the birth of Apollo (old Greece?) by linking it not to a previous Greek myth but to the Egyptian myth of Horus. I would further note that in the *Hymn to Zeus* Callimachus actually moves the centre. In a passage that closely follows the Hesiodic narrative of the birth of Zeus and the origins of the Delphic omphalos, Callimachus relocates the omphalos to Crete (lines 44-45), so that it now lies midway between the centre for old Greece (Delphi) and Egypt.

*A.S. Hollis:* With respect to interpreting in terms of both the Greek and the Egyptian tradition (your 'seeing double'): similar issues arise in the interpretation of Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue* as R.G.M. Nisbet has argued in "Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*: Easterners and Westerners", reprinted in his *Collected Papers*. And a strong Egyptian element in Tibullus 1.7 (*The Triumph of Messala*) has been transferred from Callimachus (mainly from VB and VS).

*S. Stephens:* Thank you, that is very helpful.

*Th. Fuhrer:* If we consider the way that in Augustan poetry Egyptian culture is read as a means of polemic (Cleopatra, Anthony, and their armies and gods are designed as barbarians) we may say that in Callimachus' poems there are no such negative notions. May we, therefore, say that the Egyptian culture was considered a highly developed civilization (and of course it was part of the Ptolemaic politics of legitimation)?

*S. Stephens:* Yes, I think that is a fair assessment.

*A.S. Hollis:* Encomia (in particular the praise of royalty) are natural places to search for Egyptian elements. Both Richard Hunter and I thought of the picture in Theocritus 17 of Ptolemy II "set up" (like a colossal statue?) in the plains (line 102), single-handedly repelling Egypt's enemies might reflect an Egyptian source or parallel.

*S. Stephens:* I had not thought of that, but think it very likely. The context in which the sentiment occurs in the *Ptolemy* does have excellent, contemporary Egyptian parallels, as Richard Hunter has, I think, pointed out in his forthcoming edition of the poem.

*A.S. Hollis:* On the integration of Hellenistic kings with local religious traditions, how close a parallel is there between the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Babylon (on which Amelie Kuhrt has recently written much)?

*S. Stephens:* Clearly there are great similarities in that both the Ptolemies and the Seleucids were required to adapt their monarchies in some measure to native practices. It is not, perhaps, coincidental that Berossus was writing about Babylon for the Seleucids about the same time that Manetho was writing about Egypt for the Ptolemies. Both dynasts had the same need to learn as much as they could about the indigenous culture. Amélie Kuhrt's work is an excellent example of what can and should be done when one reads the native language as well as Greek. Willy Clarysse's and Dorothy Thompson's current work with Greek and Demotic documents will be similarly enlightening for the early Ptolemaic period<sup>1</sup>.

*A.S. Hollis:* I was glad that in the discussion you mentioned the recent discoveries in the Harbour at Alexandria. If it turns out that, already in the third century BC, Alexandria had a much more Egyptian aspect than one might have thought, that could affect our view of Callimachus.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *Hellenism in the East*, ed. by A. KUHRT and S. SHERWIN-WHITE (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1987) and D. THOMPSON, "Literacy and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt", in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. by Alan BOWMAN and G. WOLFF (Cambridge 1994), 67-83.