

## The Ptolemies

Jones, P. J. "Cleopatra: A Sourcebook."  
University of Oklahoma Press, 2006

THE DESCENDANTS OF PTOLEMY I, a general in Alexander the Great's army, officially ruled Egypt from 305 to 30 B.C. Cleopatra VII was the last Ptolemaic ruler. The Ptolemies adopted the titles, iconography, and traditions of the Egyptian pharaohs, including the custom of marriage between brothers and sisters. The official language of the dynasty, however, was Greek.

### THE DIVISION OF ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE

When Alexander the Great died without naming a successor in 323 B.C., his kingdom, which had extended the boundaries of the known world as far as India and Egypt, was broken into parts, each controlled by one of his generals. Egypt came under the control of Ptolemy I, the ancestor of Cleopatra.

1.1. Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* 18.1.1–5 (60–30 B.C., Greek, prose)

*Diodorus Siculus wrote a history of the world extending from the realm of myth to 60 B.C. Despite his claim to write a universal history, Diodorus focuses primarily on Greece, Sicily, and Rome. His knowledge of Egypt, however, was likely firsthand, as he is thought to have done research for his history there between 60 and 56 B.C.*

Pythagoras of Samos, along with some other ancient thinkers, demonstrated that human souls are created immortal and that, following this doctrine, a soul knows the future at the moment of death when it separates from the body. The poet Homer seems to have agreed with them, as he presents Hector, who, at the moment of his death, predicts to Achilles the death that will soon follow for him also. So too in recent times it is said that the phenomenon described above has happened to many at the end of their lives and, in particular, to Alexander of Macedon when he died. For when he was ending his life in Babylon and, as he was breathing his last, his companions asked to whom he bequeathed his kingdom, he replied, "To the best man, for I see my funeral games as a great contest among my friends."<sup>1</sup> And the prediction came true: for the most illustrious of Alexander's companions, in their competition for supremacy, engaged in many great contests after his death.

1.2. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.6.2–4, 1.6.8–1.7.1 (ca. A.D. 150, Greek, prose)

*The Description of Greece is a travel guide in which Pausanias demonstrates considerable interest in and knowledge of the topography of Greece and its monuments. Greek speakers who resided outside Greece, often in Asia Minor, constituted a significant part of his audience. During the Roman Empire, there was considerable interest in the Greek past; thus, Pausanias includes some historical information along with his topographical observations. In the passages that follow, Pausanias recounts the events that followed the death of Alexander the Great—in particular, how Ptolemy I, one of Alexander's generals, established his dynasty in Egypt.*

6. The Macedonians think that Ptolemy was the son of Philip, son of Amyntas, although he is called the son of Lagus, for Ptolemy's mother was already pregnant with him when Philip gave her in marriage to Lagus. They say that Ptolemy accomplished many notable deeds in Asia, especially when he, more so than any of Alexander's other companions, protected him when he was in a dangerous situation with the Oxydracae. After Alexander died, Ptolemy opposed those who

1. The death of a great man might be memorialized by athletic competitions held in his honor.

wanted to hand over the whole empire to Arrhidaeus,<sup>2</sup> the son of Philip, and, thus, he was responsible for the peoples being divided into kingdoms. After crossing into Egypt, Ptolemy killed Cleomenes, whom Alexander had appointed to govern Egypt, because he was an associate of Perdiccas<sup>3</sup> and therefore not loyal to Ptolemy. He also persuaded the Macedonians appointed to convey Alexander's body to Aegae<sup>4</sup> to surrender it to him. He buried it in Memphis with a Macedonian ceremony but, since he knew that Perdiccas would initiate hostilities, he kept Egypt under guard. Perdiccas joined himself to Arrhidaeus, the son of Philip, and Alexander, the son of Alexander the Great and Roxane,<sup>5</sup> daughter of Oxyartes, to make his conquest look legitimate, but in fact he planned to usurp Ptolemy's Egyptian kingdom. Perdiccas, however, driven out of Egypt, no longer admired for his military skill, and fallen from favor with the Macedonians, died at the hands of his bodyguards. Ptolemy's prospects improved immediately as a result of Perdiccas's death: he conquered the Syrians and Phoenicians, he received the exile Seleucus,<sup>6</sup> son of Antiochus, who had been driven out by Antigonos,<sup>7</sup> and himself prepared to retaliate against Antigonos. He persuaded Cassander, son of Antipater,<sup>8</sup> and Lysimachus, ruler of Thrace, to ally with him on the grounds that Seleucus was an exile and that Antigonos was a growing threat to all of them.

When Antigonos died, Ptolemy again overpowered the Syrians and Cyprus and reinstated Pyrrhus to Thesprotia. When there was a rebellion in Cyrene, Magas, the son of Berenice, Ptolemy's wife at the time, conquered Cyrene in the fifth year after the revolt. If Ptolemy was in fact the son of Philip, son of Amyntas, he seems to have acquired from his father a passion for women: although he was married to Eurydice, the daughter of Antipater, and had children with her, he fell in love with Berenice, whom Antipater had sent to accompany Eurydice to Egypt. After falling in love with Berenice,

2. Half brother of Alexander the Great.

3. Another of Alexander's generals.

4. The Macedonian capital.

5. The wife of Alexander the Great.

6. Another of Alexander's generals.

7. Another of Alexander's generals.

8. The general Alexander left in charge of Macedonia when he went on campaign.

Ptolemy had children with her and, when he reached the end of his life, he left the kingdom of Egypt to the Ptolemy who shares his name with an Athenian tribe. This was the Ptolemy born from Berenice and not from Antipater's daughter.

7. This Ptolemy fell in love with and married his full sister Arsinoe, an act that in no way followed Macedonian customs, but rather those of the Egyptians he ruled. Secondly, he executed his brother Angaeus, who was accused of plotting against him. He also brought Alexander's body back from Memphis. He killed another of his brothers as well, this one the son of Eurydice, when it was discovered he was fomenting revolt among the Cyprians. When Magas, Ptolemy's half-brother, was made governor of Cyrene by his mother, Berenice (his father was Philip, a Macedonian of low birth), he organized a revolt against Ptolemy in Cyrene and launched an attack on Egypt.

#### ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria, Egypt, one of many Alexandrias founded by Alexander the Great during his campaigns, had a particularly strategic location: as a coastal city it boasted access to commerce and communication. It was also protected, however, by the harbor formed by the island Pharos (see map 1). Its position at the mouth of the Nile also provided easy access to inland locations. This topography contributed to Alexandria's rise to prominence in the Hellenistic world.

#### 1.3. Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 26.3–6 (A.D. 110–15, Greek, prose)

*For more on Plutarch, see selection 2.1. Here, Plutarch describes a dream Alexander the Great had that led to the founding of Alexandria.*

Then at night, as he slept, an amazing sight came to him: a stately, gray-haired man seemed to be standing beside him and saying these words:

“An island lies in the swell-filled sea,  
in front of Egypt; they call it Pharos.”<sup>9</sup>

9. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.354–55.

Instantly, he stood up and went to Pharos, which was then still an island a little above the mouth of the Nile at Canopus, but now is attached to the mainland by a causeway. When he saw the place was perfectly shaped (for the island is fairly similar in width to an isthmus and lies between the lagoon and the open sea, which itself ends in a large harbor), he said that Homer was not only wonderful in other respects, but also was the wisest of all builders and he decreed that they draw up plans for the city suited to the site. They had no chalk, so they took barley and drew a curved line on the dark ground. Straight lines extended from its inner edge to form the shape of a cloak, just like the lines that extend from the hem of a cloak when the top is gathered, narrowing its area symmetrically. As the king was appreciating the plan, suddenly a vast multitude of birds of every size and variety from the river and the lagoon alighted upon the place like clouds and left no trace of the barley, an omen that worried even Alexander. Nevertheless, the prophets advised him to take courage, saying that the city he founded would be extremely productive and would nurture all sorts of men.

#### 1.4. Strabo, *Geography* 17.1.7–9 (A.D. 18–23, Greek, prose)

*Strabo researched his Geography largely during the Augustan period, intending it to be of use to rulers and generals. He visited Egypt after the death of Cleopatra and thus had firsthand knowledge of the topography. Here he is concerned with the merits of Alexandria's location and its characteristics as a city.*

7. The site has many advantageous features. The region is bordered by two seas: the so-called Egyptian Sea to the north and to the south the Mareian Lake, which is also called Mareotis and into which many canals from the Nile empty from above and from both sides; these canals can accommodate larger import ships than the canals leading to the sea and, as a result, the harbor of the lake surpasses that of the sea in wealth; the place also has more exports from Alexandria than it has imports; one can determine in Alexandria and in Dichaearchia,<sup>10</sup> when one sees the merchant ships as they arrive

10. Puteoli.

and as they depart, how much heavier and how much lighter they sail to and from there. In addition to the wealth generated by commerce from both directions for the lake harbor and the sea harbor, the air quality is worth mentioning. Indeed, this too is thanks to water on both sides and the well-timed risings of the Nile. Other cities located on lakes have heavy and stifling air during the heat of summer, because the edges of the lakes grow marshy from evaporation caused by the sun. This moisture draws up noxious substances and the air is unhealthy for breathing and causes contagious diseases. In Alexandria, however, when summer begins, the Nile is full and it fills the lake and thus does not allow any marsh to produce harmful exhalations. Then, too, the Etesian winds blow from the north and from the entire sea and, as a result, the Alexandrians have pleasant summer weather.

8. The city is shaped like a cloak: its long sides are along the two coasts; it is approximately thirty stades<sup>11</sup> at its longest and its short sides are the isthmuses, which are each seven or eight stades long and bordered on one side by the sea and on the other by the lake. Streets good for horseback riding and chariot driving cut through the whole city; two of the streets are particularly broad, as they are more than one hundred feet wide, and they intersect one another at right angles. The city has exceedingly beautiful public parks and palaces covering a quarter or a third of its area, since each of the kings, just as he contributed some enhancement to the public monuments, so too he added to the existing buildings a private residence, so that now, as the poet says,

They are one on top of the other.<sup>12</sup>

They are all connected to one another, however, and with the harbor, even those located outside the harbor. One part of the palaces is the Museum, which has a path for walking, an exedra,<sup>13</sup> and a large house in which is the common dining room of the learned men who are members of the Museum. These members not only own common property, but also have a priest devoted to the Museum, at one time an official appointed by the kings, but now appointed by Augustus.

11. A stade is approximately six hundred feet.

12. Homer, *Odyssey* 17.266, describing the palace of Odysseus.

13. An exedra is a hall furnished with seats, used for lecturing and conversing.

The Monument, as they call it, also is part of the palaces. It is an enclosure in which are the burials of the kings and of Alexander. Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, preempted Perdiccas<sup>14</sup> by robbing him of Alexander's body, as he brought it from Babylon and was passing near Egypt, so strong was Ptolemy's greed and desire for control of Egypt. Indeed, Perdiccas died, killed by his soldiers when Ptolemy attacked and blockaded him on a deserted island. Thus, Perdiccas died, run through by the javelins of his men as they attacked him. With him were kings, Arrhidaeus and Alexander's children, along with Roxane, the wife of Alexander;<sup>15</sup> they all went to Macedonia, but Ptolemy took Alexander's body and buried it in Alexandria, where it remains to this day, though not in the same sarcophagus. The current one is glass, whereas Ptolemy placed him in one made of gold. The Ptolemy known as Coccus and Pareisactus<sup>16</sup> despoiled it. He had come from Syria, but was killed right away, so he never saw any profit from his plundering.

9. On the right-hand side of the great harbor near the entrance are the island and tower known as Pharos; on the other side are reefs and the headland called Lochias, on which a palace is located. On the left as one sails into the harbor are the inner palaces, which are adjacent to those on Lochias and have many multicolored dwellings and groves. Beneath these is the man-made harbor, hidden from view and for the private use of the kings; there is also Antirrhodos, an island located just outside the man-made harbor, that has a palace and small harbor. It is called Antirrhodos because it rivals Rhodes.<sup>17</sup> Above lies the theater; then comes the Poseidion, an elbow-shaped outcropping near the so-called Emporium that has on it a temple of Poseidon. To this promontory, Antony added a causeway, extending it even further into the middle of the harbor, and, at its end, he constructed a royal residence that he named the Timonium.<sup>18</sup> This

14. Perdiccas was a close associate of Alexander the Great. After Alexander's death, his successors vied for possession of his remains, which served as a powerful representation of one's status and connection to Alexander. Perdiccas was responsible for bringing Alexander's body back to Macedonia, but Ptolemy hijacked the coffin and brought it to Egypt.

15. Alexander's will granted Perdiccas custody of Philip Arrhidaeus, Alexander's half brother; his children; and his wife Roxane.

16. Coccus, "Scarlet"; Pareisactus, "Usurper" or "Illegitimate"; identified as Ptolemy XI.

17. The island of Rhodes was known for its five harbors, which made it well suited to commerce; it was also a cultural center that attracted philosophers, artists, and writers.

18. Timon was an Athenian whose friends deserted him when he lost his money; when he became rich again, they returned, but he drove them away.

was his final project: after being abandoned by his friends when he returned to Alexandria following the defeat at Actium, he chose to live out his days like Timon, spending his time alone, apart from that type of friends. Next comes the Caesarium, the Emporium, and the storehouses. After these come the shipyards, which go all the way to the Heptastadium. These are the things around the great harbor.

#### PTOLEMY I IN THE AFTERLIFE

In the Hellenistic period, Alexandria began to surpass Athens as the intellectual center of the Mediterranean world. Some of the finest literature of the period was written at Alexandria by poets such as Theocritus and Callimachus. These poets, who were scholars as well, oversaw the collection of the greatest works of Greek literature in the Library of Alexandria. The Ptolemies, as monarchs, took on the role of patrons.

##### 1.5. Theocritus, *Idyll* 17 (278–270 B.C., Greek, verse)

*Originally from Syracuse, Sicily, Theocritus became a court poet in Alexandria. He founded the literary genre of bucolic poetry, which takes as its theme shepherds, their songs, and their loves. Theocritus was a contemporary of Callimachus and, like Callimachus, valued highly refined, polished poems. In the selection that follows, Theocritus crafts an encomium of the Ptolemies as he asks Ptolemy II Philadelphus for his patronage.*

Let us begin from Zeus and let us end with him also, Muses. 1  
 Of the immortals, Zeus is best, but whenever we sing  
 of men let Ptolemy be mentioned first, last,  
 and in the middle, for he is the most outstanding of men.  
 The ancient heroes were born from demigods 5  
 and after accomplishing noble deeds, found wise poets  
 to memorialize them, but since I know how to praise,  
 let me sing of Ptolemy:<sup>19</sup> poems are a prize of the gods too.  
 The woodcutter who comes to densely forested Mt. Ida  
 peers about, surrounded by abundance, to see where to begin 10  
 the task. What shall I mention first? The gods have honored

19. Ptolemy I Soter, "Savior."

the best of kings with gifts too numerous to recount.  
 It was evident from his ancestry that Ptolemy, son of Lagus,  
 was the sort of man to accomplish a great deed, when he  
 had a plan in mind such as no other man could have imagined. 15

The father honored him equally with the blessed  
 immortals, and a golden throne is set up for him in the house  
 of Zeus; next to him sits his friend Alexander,  
 hated by the Persians, a god whose crown gleams.  
 Across from these sits the chair of centaur slaying 20  
 Heracles, which is made of unyielding adamant.  
 There, he feasts with the other gods as he  
 rejoices exceedingly in his sons' sons,  
 because the son of Cronus removed age from their limbs  
 and that his offspring are called immortal. 25  
 Heracles' mighty son was the ancestor of Ptolemy  
 and Alexander  
 and they both count Heracles as their most distant ancestor.<sup>20</sup>  
 Therefore, after drinking all the fragrant nectar  
 he desires, Heracles, departing for his wife's quarters,  
 gives one of them his bow and the quiver he carries under  
 his arm, 30  
 and to the other his iron hard club rough with knots,  
 as they lead Zeus's bearded son with his weapons  
 to the ambrosial bedroom of white-ankled Hebe.  
 How conspicuous was legendary Berenice  
 among wise women, and what a boon to her parents. 35  
 To her perfumed bosom the august queen of Cyprus,  
 daughter of Dione,<sup>21</sup> pressed tender hands; and so  
 it is said that no man loved his wife  
 as much as Ptolemy loved his Berenice.  
 But she loved him much more. Thus, a man 40  
 having confidence in his children, might turn over to them  
 his whole estate, since he went to bed with his loving wife.  
 But if a woman is heartless, she is always thinking of another,

20. In the ancient world the Macedonian royal family's genealogy was traced to Caranus, a descendant of Heracles.

21. In Homer, Aphrodite was the daughter of Zeus and Dione.

they give birth carelessly, and the children do not look like  
their father.

Aphrodite, revered goddess, surpassingly beautiful, 45  
Berenice was your care; because of you, graceful  
Berenice did not cross pitiable Acheron,  
but you snatched her up before she approached the dark  
ship and the gloomy ferryman of the dead,  
you took her away to your temple, giving her some of your  
honors. 50

She is kind to all mortals and she inspires them with soft  
loves, and makes cares light for those who yearn.  
Dark-browed woman of Argos,<sup>22</sup> you bore savage Diomedes  
by your union with Tydeus, a Calydonian man;  
deep-bosomed Thetis bore spear-throwing Achilles 55  
to Peleus, son of Aeacus; and you, spearman Ptolemy,<sup>23</sup>  
illustrious Berenice bore to Ptolemy the spearman.  
Cos<sup>24</sup> raised you, having received you as a newborn  
from your mother, when first you looked upon the light.  
There, the daughter of Antigone,<sup>25</sup> heavy with labor, 60  
called upon girdle-loosening Eleithuia;<sup>26</sup> and she  
propitiously stood beside her and soothed the pain  
in all her limbs. The beloved child was born  
and he resembled his father. Seeing this, Cos rejoiced  
and, holding the child in kindly arms, said, 65  
“May you be fortunate, child, and may you honor me  
as much as Phoebus Apollo honored Delos of the dark  
blue coast;  
and with equal honor inaugurate the Triopian hill,<sup>27</sup>  
and apportion equal respect to the Dorians who are nearby;  
king Apollo loved Rheneae as much as Delos.”<sup>28</sup> 70  
So the island spoke. From above, a great eagle cried out  
three times from the clouds, a bird of prophecy.

22. Deipyle was the daughter of the king of Argos and the wife of Tydeus.

23. Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

24. An island in the southeastern Aegean Sea.

25. Berenice was the daughter of Antigone.

26. The goddess of childbirth.

27. There was a temple to Triopian Apollo on a promontory in southwest Asia Minor.

28. Rheneae: an island near Delos.

This was a sign from Zeus: revered kings are the care of  
Zeus, son of Cronus. But preeminent is he whom Zeus loves  
from the moment of his birth; great good fortune will be his and 75  
he will rule many lands and many seas.  
Many continents and many races of men  
grow their crops, aided by Zeus's rain,  
but no land flourishes as much as Egypt's floodplains,  
when the Nile flood softens the clods, 80  
and no land has so many cities of men skilled in their crafts.  
Egypt has three hundred cities,  
plus three thousand, plus three times ten thousand,  
plus two times three, plus three times nine,  
and king Ptolemy rules them all. 85

He also has a share of Phoenicia, of Arabia,  
of Syria, of Libya, and of the dark Ethiopians;  
he has command of all the Pamphylians, the Cilician  
spear-throwers,  
the Lycians, the bellicose Carians,  
and the islands of the Cyclades, as he possesses the best ships 90  
to sail the sea. Every sea, every land,  
all the rushing rivers are subject to Ptolemy;  
many horsemen, many shield-bearers  
equipped with gleaming bronze, gather around him.  
He could outweigh all kings in wealth, 95  
so much comes daily to his rich palace  
from everywhere. The people attend to their work with security,  
for no inland enemy crosses the Nile, abundant in fish,  
and sounds the battle cry in the towns of others,  
no one leaps from a swift ship onto the beach 100  
and, hostile, takes up arms against Egypt's cattle.  
Such a man holds sway over these wide plains,  
fair-haired Ptolemy, skilled in casting the spear,  
to whom it is a care to guard his inheritance,  
as is fitting for a good king, and he also wishes to add to it. 105  
But the gold does not collect uselessly in that rich house,  
like the wealth of the ceaselessly toiling ants:<sup>29</sup>

29. Herodotus tells of “ants” (probably marmots) that turn up gold while digging their burrows (3.102–5). See Peissel 1984.

the famous temples of the gods receive much,  
 since Ptolemy always dedicates the first fruits and adds  
 other offerings;  
 he has given much to powerful kings, 110  
 much to cities, and much to his noble companions.  
 No man skilled in singing a clear-toned song comes  
 to the sacred contests of Dionysus  
 without receiving a prize commensurate with his talent.  
 Those who speak for the Muses celebrate Ptolemy in song 115  
 for these benefactions. After all, what is more noble  
 for a wealthy man than to have a good reputation among men?  
 Fame is all that remains for the sons of Atreus:<sup>30</sup> all the  
 treasure  
 they acquired when they captured Priam's great palace  
 is now hidden in that gloom from which there is no return. 120  
 This man alone of those who lived long ago and those whose  
 footprints are still warm in the dust they trod beneath their  
 feet,  
 has established incense-filled temples to his mother and father;  
 in them, he has placed beautiful statues of them, made of 125  
 gold and ivory, as saviors of all mortals.  
 There too, he burns many rich thighs of cattle  
 on the glowing altars, as the months pass,  
 along with his stately wife, than whom no wife better  
 holds her husband in her arms in his home,  
 for she cherishes from the heart her brother and husband. 130  
 So too was the sacred union of the immortals  
 whom Queen Rhea bore to rule Olympus:<sup>31</sup>  
 Iris, still a virgin, after purifying her hands with perfume,  
 made up a single bed for Zeus and Hera to sleep in.  
 Farewell, King Ptolemy, and I will sing of you and the other 135  
 demigods equally and I will speak words that will not, I think,  
 be lost  
 to those who come after. But for the glory itself, you must  
 ask Zeus.

30. Agamemnon and Menelaus.

31. I.e., Zeus and Hera.

## THE LOCK OF BERENICE

The lock in question belonged to Berenice II (b. ca. 273 B.C.), wife and cousin of Ptolemy III. The occasion of these poems was a dedication by Berenice of a lock of her hair at the temple of Arsinoe Aphrodite at Zephyrium. The offering fulfilled a vow to dedicate a lock of hair upon her husband's safe return from the Third Syrian War (247–246 B.C.). The lock mysteriously disappeared from the temple, and Conon, the court astronomer, identified it with a group of stars, the constellation Coma Berenices.<sup>32</sup>

1. 6. Callimachus, *Aetia* frag. 110, edited by Pfeiffer<sup>33</sup> (246–245 B.C., Greek, verse)

*Callimachus, a poet active in Alexandria during the reigns of Ptolemy II (282–246 B.C.) and Ptolemy III (246–221 B.C.), exemplifies the poetic sensibilities of the Hellenistic period. His highly polished verses constitute a polemic against epic bombast. As Callimachus himself said, epic is a broad, muddy river, while his poetry is a pure spring (Hymn 2.108–12).*<sup>34</sup>

“The Lock of Berenice” comes from Callimachus's partially preserved poem, the *Aetia*, an episodic exploration of the origins of various religious cults, festivals, and places. This fragment is a good example of Callimachus's penchant for nonepic subject matter: his topic is not the queen, but a lock of her hair. In this passage, the lock speaks.

Having looked over the whole charted sky and where  
 [the stars] go 1  
 Conon saw me too in the air, the lock 7  
 of Berenice, which she dedicated to all the gods  
 And I swore by your<sup>35</sup> head and your life 40  
 The shining descendant of Theia<sup>36</sup> is carried over the spit 44

32. The constellation is still known as the Coma Berenices and is located north of Virgo, between Boötes and Leo. See Ferguson 1980, 50.

33. Pfeiffer 1965.

34. On Callimachus's views on water and poetry, see Cameron 1995, 363–66.

35. Berenice's.

36. “The descendant of Theia” probably refers to the sun.

of your mother Arsinoe,<sup>37</sup> and the deadly ships of the Persians  
went through the middle of Athos.<sup>38</sup>

What are we locks of hair to do, when such mountains yield  
to iron?

Would that the race of the Chalybes<sup>39</sup> might perish,  
since they brought it forth from the earth like an evil plant,  
they who first revealed it and devised the workmanship of  
hammers.

50

Just now my sister-locks were lamenting me, newly-shorn as  
I was,

and at once the brother of Ethiopian Memnon,  
delicate wind beating his dappled wings,  
horse of violet-girdled Locrian Arsinoe,  
snatched and seized me with his breath, and bearing me  
through the moist air

55

placed me in the lap of Cypris.<sup>40</sup>  
Aphrodite Zephyritis<sup>41</sup> herself inhabiting the Canopic coast  
[chose] him to fill that need.

And so that not only the . . . of the Minoan bride<sup>42</sup>  
[may shine] on men, but I too,

60

the beautiful lock of Berenice may be counted  
among the many stars,  
Cypris placed me, bathed in the waters<sup>43</sup> and  
rising near the immortals, as a new star among the ancient ones

we go forth . . . late autumn to the Ocean

67

These things do not bring me as much joy  
as I feel grief over no longer touching the head  
from which, when she was still a maiden, I drank in many  
simple perfumes,  
but I did not partake of womanly myrrh.

75

37. "The spit" may refer to an obelisk, which would be an object shaped like a spit used for roasting meat; could also refer to Mt. Athos. "Your mother Arsinoe": Arsinoe II.

38. The Persian general Xerxes made a canal through the Chalcidian promontory where Mt. Athos is located, 483–481 B.C..

39. A Scythian people credited with inventing ironwork.

40. Aphrodite.

41. The deified Arsinoe.

42. Ariadne; see note 56.

43. I.e., setting in the ocean.

### 1.7. Catullus, Poem 66 (59–58 B.C., Latin)

Poem 66 is Catullus's translation of Callimachus's "The Lock of Berenice" (see selection 1.6). Catullus was one of a number of writers in the Roman Republic known as *poetae novi* (new poets), who preferred to write short poems on personal themes rather than epics. In writing poems of this type, Catullus embraces the Alexandrian poetic ideals also evident in Callimachus's poetry. Catullus's translation appears quite faithful to Callimachus's rendition as far as we can tell, given the fragmentary nature of the original.<sup>44</sup> The final ten lines, however, may well be Catullus's own creation.<sup>45</sup>

Poem 66 seems to be the translation that Catullus mentions in Poem 65, which takes the form of a letter to his friend Hortalus. In that poem Catullus says that although he is still mourning the death of his brother, he is enclosing the translation Hortalus had asked for:

But nevertheless, amid such sorrows, Hortalus, I am sending you  
these translated verses of Callimachus  
(lest you think that your words, entrusted to the wandering winds,  
by chance slipped away from my mind) . . .

Catullus, Poem 65.15–18

The fact that Catullus's brother died abroad may resonate with the subject matter of "The Lock of Berenice" and thus may not be a purely incidental detail.

He who observed all the lights of the great universe,  
who ascertained the risings and settings of stars and  
how the fiery glow of the white-hot sun is eclipsed,  
how planets withdraw at prescribed times,  
how the sweet love that stealthily banished Trivia<sup>46</sup> to Latmian  
caves<sup>47</sup>  
calls her away from her celestial course:  
that same man, Conon, saw me,  
a lock from Berenice's head,

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44. Quinn 1985, 355.

45. Hutchinson 1990, 323.

46. The moon goddess; a reference to the myth of Selene and Endymion.

47. Latmus: a mountain in Caria.