

## Callimachus' Fifth *Hymn* as Praise for the Ptolemaic Queens

In this paper I argue that Callimachus' fifth *Hymn* connects the Ptolemaic queens to Athena, as *Hymns* 1, 2, and 3 have connected the kings to Zeus. Callimachus' fifth *Hymn*, addressed to the bath pourers of Athena, is set in Argos, a city closely associated with Heracles. Bulloch, in his commentary on Callimachus' fifth *Hymn*, believes the hymn "contains no overt political references" though he recognizes that "Argos was a place of unusual significance for his [Callimachus'] Ptolemaic patrons" (13). Despite the lack of explicit mention of the Ptolemies, there are many links to them in this poem. In addition to its setting in Argos, the poem's references to Heracles remind Callimachus' readers of the Ptolemies' ancestry and descent. Moreover, Callimachus' portrayal of Athena gives this hymn an even stronger tie to the Ptolemies. While Arsinoe II was closely associated with Aphrodite in cult, she is also associated with Athena in Posidippus 36. This, coupled with Callimachus' portrayal of Berenice in *Aetia* fr. 3.1 and Posidippus 78, also about Berenice, suggests that the fifth *Hymn* does provide a political connection in the comparisons of the goddess with the queens.

In Posidippus' epigram collection, Arsinoe is portrayed as Athena, providing a precedent in literature for the queens to be associated with this goddess (Stephens 2004). After briefly examining the similarities drawn between Athena and the Ptolemaic queens throughout Posidippus, this paper returns to the fifth *Hymn* to show how Athena's characteristics illustrated there maintain this connection.

In the fifth *Hymn*, Athena is portrayed as a "horsewoman" when she sees to her horses (5-6; 9-12) (Depew 1994: 418). In Callimachus *Aetia* fr. 3.1 and Posidippus' epigrams (78, 79, 87), the Ptolemaic queens were also portrayed as "horsewomen," recognized for their victories in the chariot races at the Olympic and Nemean games. As the mythological portion of the fifth

*Hymn* begins at line 70, the scene is set at a *locus amoenus* in Thebes, on Mount Helicon near the Hippocrene spring. Athena and her favorite nymph, Chariclo, are taking a bath (70-72). As Depew (1994) and others have noted, this is an unusual situation for Athena. Yet, in Posidippus' poetry book, Arsinoe is also connected to nymphs and bathing (113, 114). Moreover, Athena's bath situation calls attention to her status as a nymph, like Artemis who is more commonly associated with forest bath scenes. Because of the strangeness of the scene in relation to Athena, all the more attention is drawn to Athena's portrayal as a nymph and a virgin. Likewise, despite being the queen, and therefore wife of the king, Berenice was often portrayed as a nymph and a "virgin" in Hellenistic poetry (Larson 2001). Posidippus' epigram 70, for example, combines both Berenice's virginity and horse racing victory in the first line: παρθένος ἡ βασίλισσα σὺν ἄντυ[γ]ι, ναί, Βερενίκη (1) and Callimachus' *Coma Berenice* speaks as the lock of a νύμφε and a virgin.

If Zeus is a Ptolemaic king and Athena is a Ptolemaic queen, this relationship shows the importance of the queens to the king's success. Athena has the power of her father: ὣς φαμένα κατένευσε τὸ δ' ἐντελής, ὧι κ' ἐπινεύσῃ/ Παλλάς, ἐπεὶ μὴ Ζεὺς τόγε θυγατέρων/ δῶκεν Ἀθαναίᾳ πατρώια πάντα φέρεσθαι (131-133). Although the portrayal of Athena in *Hymn 5* is not overtly linked to the queens, I argue that comparison to other contemporary texts suggests a common project of praise involving the qualities of Athena as Zeus' (Ptolemy's) indispensable helper and also the "virgin" horse racing Ptolemaic queens.

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