

Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics

Writing Alexandria as the (Common)place

Version 1.0

January 2012

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Abstract: In 333 BC Alexandria did not exist. The transition from a place devoid of cultural significance (for Greeks) to the first city of the Mediterranean was not just a matter of a few buildings or some Greek immigrants. The making of place is central to the process of identity formation, which is in turn integral to the construction of social order. Place-making requires a sense of shared and evolving history—a past, present, and future that is commonly encoded in genealogies; investment in common myths and rituals; and social hierarchies that both inform and are informed by the specific landscape. For this process of place-making, it follows that poets would play an important role both as repositories for, and as artificers of, cultural memory. This paper discusses how Callimachus helps to create the cultural memory of ancient Alexandria in his poetry.

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Writing Alexandria as the (Common)place

To become a homeland, a place requires topography. To understand how a place becomes a homeland, one must know its topography. By topography I refer to any conceptual map that cites a place. Topographies are the *graphe* of a *topos*, the writing of a (common)place. Topographies assign to a place a sequence of symbols readable through the codes of verisimilitude, mapping, description, or narration.... Mapping a homeland is both a process and a product. Topography is a process: it requires the persistent return to history, the systematic unearthing of ruins, the conscientious recovery of traditions, and, generally, the reactivation of an inherited past. But topography is also the product of these reactivations: it consists in the archive of shared images, evolving traditions, literary works, and visual maps, as well as in the geopolitical entity itself.

Artemis Leontis, *The Topographies of Hellenism*.¹

In 333 BCE Alexandria did not exist. To borrow the words of Gertrude Stein, there was no there there. It was merely a location on the northern Egyptian (that is, Libyan) coastline with a harbor and probably the remnants of an Egyptian military settlement, but apart from the island of the Pharos (which according to the *Odyssey* 4. 360-85 was the home of Proteus) there was nothing of there-ness for Greeks. The transition from a place devoid of cultural significance to the first city of the Mediterranean was not just a matter of a few buildings or a handful of Greek immigrants. The making of place is central to the process of identity formation and integral to the construction of social order.² It is what collectively human groups do to convert a space to their place and not no-place or some others' place. In Greek terms, what makes Athens, Athens and not Sparta, or Delphi, Delphi and not Delos. Place-making requires a sense of shared and evolving history—a past, present, and future; investment in common myths and rituals, and social hierarchies that both inform and are informed by the specific landscape. Cultural memory is an integral facet of place making, and memory is aided and abetted by those who write about a place. Callimachus' construction of Alexandria as a place—how he chooses to imagine it and what he sees or does not see—in turn has shaped our modern scholarly reception of Alexandria (whether we think consciously about it or not). In what follows I want to consider three features of his poetry that help to create the cultural memory of ancient Alexandria: getting there, ancestors, and being there.

But first some background: Callimachus' active poetic life more or less coincided with the reign of Ptolemy II (285-246 BC) and at least the first few years of the reign of Ptolemy III. And it is good to remind ourselves that his Alexandria was not that described by Strabo (who was writing at the end of the first century AD): this earlier

¹ *Topographies of Hellenism: Mapping the Homeland* (Ithaca, 1995) 3.

² See Preucel and Meskell, "Places," in *A Companion to Social Anthropology*, eds. L. Meskell and R. W. Preucel (Oxford and Malden, Mass., 2004) 215.

city had some sort of walls, the palace environs, and the *Museion* (which may or may not have included the Library). The lighthouse was built between 297-85; the stadium (*Lageion*) was completed by the time the Ptolemaia was celebrated about 276; the heptostadion and dockyards were built during Ptolemy II's reign to accommodate his extensive naval fleet. The Cape Zephyrium temple and the *Arsinoeion* were constructed (probably) just prior to and immediately after Arsinoe II's death in 270. The great temple to Serapis was only completed under the third Ptolemy, probably after Callimachus' death. Whether there was as yet a theater or a *Thesmophorion* is moot. Ptolemy IV is credited with the *Sema* of Alexander, though it was probably Soter who moved the body to Alexandria from Memphis.³ Within these growing and changing civic environs, the Greek community was a diverse mix. To judge from papyrus evidence from the rest of Egypt, Greeks in descending order of concentration would have included: Macedonians (mainly the soldiers), Cyreneans, Thracians, Islanders, and Athenians.⁴

In order to gauge the challenge in writing Alexandria as a (common)place for crown and commoners alike, let us first consider how Callimachus represents the foundation of Cyrene, his *patria*, which was already about 400 years old when Alexandria was founded—thus an old Greek colonial city. At the center of the *Hymn to Apollo* Callimachus describes the act of foundation:

56 Φοῖβος γὰρ ἀεὶ πολίεσσι φιληδεῖ
κτιζομένησ', αὐτὸς δὲ θεμεΐλια Φοῖβος ὑφαίνει.

65 Φοῖβος καὶ βαθύγειον ἐμὴν πόλιν ἔφρασε Βάττω
καὶ Λιβύην ἐσιόντι κόραξ ἠγήσατο λαῶ,
δεξιὸς οἰκιστῆρι, καὶ ὤμοσε τείχεα δώσειν
ἡμετέροις βασιλεῦσιν· ἀεὶ δ' εὖορκος Ἀπόλλων.

72 Σπάρτη τοι, Καρνεῖε, τόδε πρῶτιστον ἔδεθλον,
δεύτερον αὖ Θήρη, τρίτατόν γε μὲν ἄστῳ Κυρήνης.
ἐκ μὲν σε Σπάρτης ἕκτον γένος Οἰδιπόδαο

75 ἤγαγε Θηραῖν ἐς ἀπόκτισιν· ἐκ δὲ σε Θήρης
οὐλος Ἀριστοτέλης Ἀσβυστίδι πάρθετο γαίη,
δεῖμε δέ τοι μάλα καλὸν ἀνάκτορον, ἐν δὲ πόλῃ
θῆκε τελεσφορίην ἐπετήσιον, ἧ ἔνι πολλοὶ
ὑστάτιον πίπτουσιν ἐπ' ἰσχίον, ὧ ἄνα, ταῦροι.

³ For a details of Alexandrian monuments organized chronologically, see J. McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt. 300 BC-AD 700* (New Haven, 2007) 32-79.

⁴ See K. Mueller, "Geographical information systems in papyrology," *BASP* 2005: 42. 63-92. The large concentration of Jews dates to the second century, and would have been an irrelevant constituency for Callimachus

- 85 ἦ ῥ' ἐχάρη μέγα Φοῖβος, ὅτε ζωστῆρες Ἐνουῶς
 ἀνέρες ὠρχήσαντο μετὰ ξανθῆσι Λιβύσσης,
 τέθμιαι εὐτέ σφιν Καρνειάδες ἦλυθον ὄραι.
 οἱ δ' οὐπω πηγῆσι Κύρης ἐδύναντο πελάσσαι
 Δωριέες, πυκινὴν δὲ νάπησ' Ἄζιλιν ἔναιον.
- 90 τοὺς μὲν ἄναξ ἶδεν αὐτός, ἔῃ δ' ἐπεδείξατο νύμφη
 στὰς ἐπὶ Μυρτούσσης κερατώδεος, ἦχι λέοντα
 Ἵψηις κατέπεφνε βοῶν σίνιν Εὐρυπύλοιο.

For Phoebus always delights in the founding of cities (56-7)...Phoebus also instructed Battus about my city with its fertile soil, and as a crow—an auspicious omen for the founder—he led the people entering Libya and swore to give walls to our kings (65-8)...Sparta, indeed, this was your first shrine, then Thera was second, and third was the city of Cyrene; from Sparta the sixth generation from Oedipus led you to their colony at Thera; from Thera a vigorous Aristotle set you beside the Asbystian land, built you a very beautiful shrine, and established a yearly festival in the city, at which many bulls fall upon their haunches for the last time, O Lord (72-9)...Indeed Phoebus greatly rejoiced when the men girt for War danced with the yellow-haired Libyan women, when the appointed time for the Carneia came for them. But the Dorians were as yet unable to draw near to the streams of Cyre, but lived in thickly wooded Azilis. These did the god himself see and he showed his bride, standing upon hornéd Myrtoussa, where the daughter of Hypseus killed the lion that was the bane of Eurypylus' cattle (85-92).

This passage, which has been thoroughly discussed by Claude Calame and Irad Malkin,⁵ serves as the *locus classicus* for the way in which Greeks imagine city foundation. It also constituted the defining myth of Callimachus' homeland, essential for his (and his fellow Cyreneans') construction of self. He characterizes Apollo's promises as made about 'my city' and to 'my kings' and 'my ancestors' (*Hymn to Apollo* 65-71). Apollo was the patron deity of Cyrene, and his temple centrally placed. In the poem he is the prime mover for the settlement through his Delphic prophecy to Battus to lead out the colonists. His marriage in mythic time to the eponymous nymph of the city, Cyrene, acts as a template for the union of Spartan men with Libyan women. This poetically imagined event in fact reflects contemporary reality: in 321, Ptolemy I (who was then in control of Cyrene) enlarged its citizen rolls from 1,000 to 10,000 by explicitly including those who were the offspring of Greek men and native women.⁶ Cyreneans hearing the hymn would thus have a mythic correlative for an event within their own immediate past. Callimachus

⁵ See, e.g. C. Calame, "Narrating the foundation of a city: the symbolic birth of Cyrene," in *Approaches to Greek Myth*, ed. L. Edmunds. (Baltimore and London, 1990) 277-341 and I. Malkin, *Myth and Territory in the Spartan Mediterranean*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994) 169-87.

⁶ See A. Laronde, *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique* (Paris. 1987) 85-128.

also includes features of the city's unique landscape—the springs of Cyre, Azelis, and Myrtussa. At the end of the hymn the pure waters of Dio surely refer to the spring at the nearby shrine of Demeter and Kore.⁷

The foundation of Alexandria in many respects behaves like a normative inversion of what we see with Cyrene. For Alexandria there is no prophecy from Delphi to lead out a colony; there is no mother city from which to transplant citizens and cult, the local landscape has no eponymous nymphs (whether native or transplanted like Cyrene), nor did the region have a permanent native population. Then, the physical location of Alexandria in previous Greek myth was marked not only as Egyptian, but belonged to (again) a normative inversion of a defining myth of Greek identity, namely, the story of the Trojan war. It was this place on the Egyptian coastline that was identified with the counter-story, the palinode. Where Helen, if she did not go to Troy after all, was kept safe until she could be returned to Menelaus. As Euripides dramatizes these events, Egypt lies outside of Greek time and space, and if the counter myth is true, then the Greeks fought and died for an *eidolon*—a fantasy. Finally, traditional elements of the process of foundation are, for Alexandria, noticeably foreign. Alexander was certainly the eponymous *oikist*. But it was not Delphi that instructed him to found the city but Zeus Ammon—the Libyan avatar of the Egyptian deity Amun. Alexander himself was not a discrete heap of bones (like Theseus) to be retrieved for a hero cult; his body was fully preserved in a crystalline sarcophagus, something closer to Egyptian cultural practice than Greek. Most unfortunately for genealogical positioning, he left no line. Writing Alexandria, therefore, posed unique problems: the familiar tropes of colony foundation did not apply, neither autochthony nor colonizing ancestors were an option, and previous Greek writing of the place of limited value.

1. Getting there

The newness of the city dictated that everyone was an immigrant, therefore, who came, where they came from, and the fact of migration itself constituted an essential dimension of place-making. Posidippus of Pella's newly discovered epigram collection provides an instructive parallel for one aspect of Callimachus' poetics: the staging of movement, of people, of objects, and ultimately of political power towards Alexandria. Posidippus' roll opens with an epigram set at the Indian Hydaspes, the furthest reaches of Alexander's expedition; subsequent epigrams in the opening section trace the movement of semi-precious stones and carved objects through Arabia and Syria until objects (and the reader) arrive at the Alexandrian coastline. The increasing size of the objects from a small, engraved jewel to a large boulder creates the sense of gathering of momentum as the section concludes with a prayer for the wellbeing of the lands of the Ptolemies. The second epigram of the second section commemorates a voyage from Thrace to Egypt, the standard sea route that anyone, including Posidippus himself, would have taken when sailing to Alexandria. In the third section, entitled *Anathematika* ('Dedications'), the poet conveys a shift in

⁷ See N. Bonacasa and S. Ensoli, *Cirene* (Milan, 2000) 38-9.

political power and artistic patronage to the new rulers of Egypt, as objects like Arion's lyre (from the court of Polycrates of Samos) and a headband (like Alexander's diadem) are now imagined as moving towards the Ptolemies.

In Callimachus' poetry we find a similar drift from other parts of the Greek Mediterranean to Alexandria. In his first and arguably his earliest hymn, for example, he stages Zeus in motion: he is born in Arcadia, then moved to Crete where he is reared, and finally becomes the patron of the Ptolemies of Alexandria. This movement south is reinforced in the poem's conclusion. After Zeus grows to adulthood, Callimachus' devotes considerable time to linking the god to the new city.⁸ If Zeus presides over the best part of power, or kings—and Callimachus states this in Hesiodic terms by a direct quotation: ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες (*Th.* 96)—we are told that Ptolemy is the best of all kings and more powerful than the rest, accomplishing at evening what he thought of in the morning (*hZeus* 84-88):

85 ἐν δὲ ῥυηφενίην ἔβαλές σφισιν, ἐν δ' ἄλις ὄλβον·
πᾶσι μὲν, οὐ μάλα δ' ἴσον. ἔοικε δὲ τεκμήρασθαι
ἡμετέρω μεδέοντι· περιπρὸ γὰρ εὐρὺ βέβηκεν.
ἔσπεριος κείνός γε τελεῖ τά κεν ἦρι νοήση·
ἔσπεριος τὰ μέγιστα, τὰ μείονα δ', εὔτε νοήση.

You have bestowed wealth upon them and prosperity in abundance, to all but not all equally. This may be inferred from my king. He far surpasses the others. At evening he accomplishes what he conceived of in the morning. At evening the greatest matters, the lesser as soon as he conceives them.

As if to reinforce the geographic relocation, these lines no longer imitate Hesiod: but now paraphrase a traditional Egyptian formula for kingship—'whatever he thinks in the morning he accomplishes at evening'.⁹ The movement from Arcadia is complete, as Callimachus makes explicit the role he assigns to his Zeus: it is to oversee the wellbeing and success of one local king in particular, Ptolemy, and in one particular place, a place that is both Greek and not Greek as the Egyptian borrowing makes clear.

A parallel southern migration occurs in the *Hymn to Delos* (162-70). The as yet unborn Apollo explains to his mother why she cannot give birth to him on Cos:

⁸ J. Clauss ("Lies and allusions: the address and date of Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*," *Cl. Ant.* 1986: 2: 155-70) following L. Koenen (*Eine agonistische Inschrift aus Ägypten und frühptolemäische Königsfeste*. Meisenheim am Glan, 1977) argues that *h. Zeus* was written for the festival of the Alexandrian *Basileia* in connection with the elevation of Philadelphus to the throne. Koenen would connect the Ptolemaic *Basileia* with Alexander's sacrifice and procession for Zeus Basileus in Memphis (Arrian 3.5.2), though others, including P. M. Fraser, disagree, see *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford, 1972) 3. 652-53.

⁹ For the Egyptian parallels, see S. A. Stephens, *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2003) 112-13.

μη σύ γε, μήτηρ,
 τῆ με τέκοις. οὐτ' οὖν ἐπιμέφομαι οὐδὲ μεγαίρω
 νῆσον, ἐπεὶ λιπαρὴ τε καὶ εὖβοτος, εἴ νύ τις ἄλλη·
 165 ἄλλὰ οἱ ἐκ Μοιρέων τις ὀφειλόμενος θεὸς ἄλλος
 ἐστί, Σαωτήρων ὕπατον γένος· ᾧ ὑπὸ μίτρην
 ἴξεται οὐκ ἀέκουσα Μακεδόνι κοιρανέεσθαι
 ἀμφοτέρη μεσόγεια καὶ αἱ πελάγεσσι κάθηνται,
 μέχρ' ὅπου περάτη τε καὶ ὀππότεν ὠκέες ἵπποι
 170 Ἥελιον φορέουσιν·

Do not give birth to me here, Mother, I do not blame nor chastise the island, which is as bright and rich in flocks as any other. But another god has been fated for it, the lofty race of the Saviors. Under his diadem, not unwilling to be ruled by a Macedonian, shall come both lands (= The Two lands) and the lands set in the sea, as far the ends of the earth and where his swift horses carry the Sun.

The new god Apollo refers to is Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who was born on Cos in 308. Cos, like Crete, is a space halfway between the northern homeland of the conqueror (Alexander) and his successors (the Ptolemies) and Egyptian Alexandria. Just as Zeus moves from his mainland birthplace to an island rearing to become king of the gods, and the patron of kings like Ptolemy, so we are shown the Macedonian Ptolemies themselves in transition from old Macedon, to Cos, where apparently Ptolemy II was reared, to the new Egyptian environment of kingship.

There is a further aspect to this poetics of relocation—in the *Hymn to Zeus* (14) Callimachus chooses to use names, like Apidanees, that encode a history of colonization and migration. The Apidaneans were the Arcadians who lived before the moon (in other words, the oldest of Greeks), and the scholiast to Apollonius of Rhodes (4.263) etymologizes the name as from Apis, the son of Phoroneus, who was in turn the son of Inachus. The name Apidanees, therefore, conveys not only antiquity, it adumbrates an ancestral relationship between mainland Greece and North Africa: the Inachid line produced Io-Epaphus-Libya, Danaus and Aegyptus, on the one hand, and Cadmus and Oedipus on the other. The former were significant for the Ptolemies, the latter Callimachus (in the *Hymn to Apollo*, 74) claims to be ancestors of Cyrene. Recent work by scholars like Jonathan Hall has demonstrated how individuals and groups constructed and elaborated genealogies of descent to define the boundaries of their social and civic identities.¹⁰ Alexandria was a city of immigrants who like Zeus and Ptolemy were in motion towards the new center. But unlike the citizens of a colony, the immigrants came not from one but multiple Greek communities. Place names, therefore, with their attendant genealogical baggage could

¹⁰ *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Chicago, 1997).

be deployed to exploit the hereditary links between ancestral Greek spaces and their (southern) colonial descendents, or between Greek and non-Greek spaces. Callimachus' use of place names and ethnics that encode a history of migration or movement to the southern Mediterranean invest Ptolemaic rule with a momentum similar to what we find in Posidippus, as if it were the inevitable goal of centuries of cultural behavior.

2. New Ancestors

But unlike Posidippus and Theocritus, who attempt to forge a link between Alexander and the Ptolemies, Callimachus seems to have focused only on the Ptolemies in creating a stable ancestral line. He probably followed the lead of the Ptolemies themselves in not showcasing Alexander as *oikist*, who after all was a dead end, but by focusing on the Macedonian-Greek ancestry of the Ptolemaic kings. According to Herodotus, when Alexander I of Macedon wished to compete in a footrace in the Olympic games, certain competitors tried to exclude him by invoking the rule that 'foreigners could not compete'. Alexander bested them twice: first by proving his Greek ancestry and then by tying in the actual competition. Alexander I could claim to be 'Greek' because in the distant past, certain Argive Greeks had migrated to Macedon (5.22.1). The Argive roots of the Macedonian line that Herodotus attributed to Alexander (8. 137-8), derived from Temenus and in particular Argeas, after whom the entire line of kings was called 'Argead'. Herodotus provides the following genealogy: from Temenos three sons fled Argos to Macedon. One of them, Perdicas, sired Argaeus, who sired Philip, who sired Aeropus, who sired Alcetes, who sired Amyntas, who was the father of Alexander I. The fact that a century later Demosthenes (3rd *Philippic* §31) was still able to assert that Philip II was 'neither a Greek nor a remote relative of the Greeks, nor even a respectable barbarian, but a wretched Macedonian', suggests that the kings of Macedon needed continually to assert their kinship with Greek communities. This could be the reason that Euripides opened his now fragmentary play, *Archelaus*, with this Argive genealogy:¹¹

Danaus, the father of fifty daughters, leaving the fairest waters of the Nile and coming into Argos, founded the city of Inachus, and established the custom that those previously called Pelasgians be called Danaans throughout Hellas....
...from Lynceus Abas was born: his offspring was double: Proitos the father of three daughters driven mad, and Acrisius, who enclosed Danae in a bronze bridal chamber. Perseus was born from Danae from streams of golden drops. He, when he cut off the Gorgon's head, coming to Ethiopia, married Andromeda the daughter of Cepheus, she bore three sons by Perseus. Alkaios and Sthenelaus,

¹¹ *Communis opinio* has it that the play was written for Archelaus of Macedon in the late fifth century BC. Whether it was performed in Macedon or Athens is unknown, but it was performed in the third century at the *Heraia* in Argos and the *Naia* in Dodona (A. Harder, *Euripides' Kresphontes and Archelaos* (Leiden 1985: 125-7), and see her discussion (177-83) on the status of this fragment (fr. 228) as the play's opening.

who held the city of Argive Mycene, and the third was the father of Alcmena, Electryon. Zeus, entering the bed of Alcmena seeded the famous Heracles. Hyllos was his son, and from his father Hyllos, was born Temenos, who dwelt in Argos as a descendent of Heracles. Being childless, my father Temenos came to the folds of holy Dodona, desirous of children. And the priestess of Dione, named for Zeus, told Temenos these things. “O child born from the seed of Heracles, Zeus gives you a child, I prophecy, whom you should name Archelaos”...

In the fourth-century to line the Sacred Way at Delphi the city of Argos had dedicated a group of ten statues of these same heroic ancestors descended from Danaus, and including Lyceus, Acrisius, Perseus, Electryon, and Alcmena, and Heracles.¹² These Argive ancestors had been critical for the kings of Macedon, and became so for the Ptolemies as well. The latter were not closely related to Alexander II (if at all), although they may have allowed the impression that Ptolemy I was a bastard son of Philip to circulate.¹³ The official line, however, according to Satyrus, who wrote a century later, in *On the Demes of Alexandria*, was that Alexander and the Ptolemies shared a common ancestor in Amyntas II (the numbering of Amyntases is disputed). This line running through Amyntas, if we continue back in time, originates with Heracles, Hyllos, and Temenos—the figures in Euripides’ play. Alexander’s kin (the Argeads) descended from Alexander I and Amyntas II, while the Ptolemies staked their claim to descent from a more obscure son of Amyntas, who was the grandfather of Arsinoe I. She was the wife of Lagos and Ptolemy I’s mother.¹⁴ Thus the same Macedonian genealogy could be enlisted to bolster the Ptolemies’ claims to legitimacy, by stressing their own hereditary connection to Alexander, and the Argead kings and to lay claim to the line’s divine ancestors, including Heracles and Perseus, who in time became useful in establishing hereditary links with other dynasts claiming descent from Heracles as well as promoting their own divinity.

As Macedonians ruling over Greeks who were immigrating from various parts of the Mediterranean, the Ptolemies could use their Argive heritage to enhance their connections to mainland Greece—particularly Sparta and Athens, as they did at the time of the Chremonidean war. These genealogies, moreover, were not confined to interactions with other parts of the Greek world. The Ptolemies promoted them in Alexandria and Ptolemais as well. Among the names for Alexandria’s civic units (or demes) were *Argeadês*, *Koineus*, *Temeneios*, *Inacheios*, *Autodikeios* (a daughter of Danaus), and *Andromacheios* (a son of Aegyptus). Although the earliest immigrants continued to retain the ethnic identities of their home *poleis* (for example, *Athenaios*, *Cynenaios*, *Samios*), the very fact that the demes of the new cities emphasized a particular set of Greek ancestors and, if one goes back far enough, ancestors that were common to almost all the Doric speaking communities, would have been a visible

¹² Hall, *Ethnic Identity* 1997: 82.

¹³ N. L. Collins, “The various fathers of Ptolemy I,” *Mnemosyne* 50 (1997) 436-76.

¹⁴ Fraser 1972: 2.123 n. 62 and 124 n. 70 (for the text of Satyrus) and see the helpful discussion in A. Bulloch, *Callimachus. The Fifth Hymn* (Cambridge, 1985) 12-3.

symbol to immigrants from disparate localities that they shared a common Greek mythological /genealogical past.

Callimachus, in his surviving poetry, only once uses the ethnic marker of Μακηδών (in the *Hymn to Delos*, 167 above); elsewhere he turns to the more distant past and identifies his monarchs with their earlier Greek, or ‘Argive’ ancestors. We find Argos and Argive prehistory throughout Callimachus’ poetry. According to the *Suda*, Callimachus wrote on the ‘foundation of Argos’ (*Argous oikismos*) and ‘the arrival of Io’ (*Ious aphixis*), which Adrian Hollis suggests, on the basis of a passage in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* would have centered on the identification of Io with Isis, and the establishment of Isis cult.¹⁵ Io was the girl who caught Zeus’s fancy, was turned into a cow by Hera, and driven over the eastern Mediterranean until she reached Egypt. There she gave birth to a son (Epaphus), conceived from Zeus by a ‘touch’. Epaphus (= Apis) in turn sired Libya and Egypt and Danaus (again these genealogies are flexible and customized for particular local needs), who returned with his daughters to become the *oikist* of Argos. Whether the *Foundation of Argos* and the *Arrival of Io* were independent poems or sections of larger works (like the *Aetia*) they are surely reliable indices of Callimachus’ interest in the mythic prehistory of Argos with its autochthonous ancestors like Inachus (also the local river) and his descendents (Phoroneus, Apis and Danaus). Io occurs in a number of places in Callimachus’ poetry. In *Ep.* 18 GP (57 Pf.) he calls her Isis *Inachiê*, equating Io with Egyptian Isis, an identification we find already in Herodotus (2.41), and quite common by the 3rd century BC. Callimachus’ hymn on the bath of Pallas Athene takes place in Argos, and throughout that poem he refers to this very early Argive history of Danaus and his daughters. Elsewhere in the *Aetia*, Danaus is prominent in cultic transfer of Athene from Egypt to Rhodes (fr. 100), and his daughters in discovering Argos’ hidden springs (fr. 65-6 Pf).

Callimachus’ insistence on the Argive roots of the Ptolemaic line has two immediate and local payoffs: Argive ancestors link the new foundation with familiar elements in Greek cultural memory, and they allow the Ptolemies a mythic claim to Egypt itself. How this works can be seen in Callimachus’ poem lauding Berenice’s chariot victory at the Nemean games.

Ζηνί τε καὶ Νεμέηι τι χαρίσιον ἔδνον ὀφείλω,
νύμφα, κα[σιγνή]των ἱερὸν αἶμα θεῶν,
ἡμ[ε]τερο.[.....].εων ἐπινίκιον ἵππω[ν].
ἄρμοῖ γὰρ Δαναοῦ γῆς ἀπὸ βουγενέος
5 εἰς Ἑλένη[ς νησῖδ]α καὶ εἰς Παλληνέα μά[ντιν],
ποιμένα [φωκάων], χρύσειον ἦλθεν ἔπος (fr. 383 Pf. + SH 254)

¹⁵ *Met.* 1.747-50: “Now people robed in linen pay her (Io) homage, a very goddess, and a son is born named Epaphus, | the seed of Jove, his temples are found beside his mother’s in many cities.” See Hollis, *Fragments of Roman Poetry. c. 60 BC – AD 20.* (Oxford, 2007) 64.

To Zeus and Nemea I owe a fair debt, bride, holy blood of the sibling gods,
 ...our epinician for your horses, for a golden word has come here from the
 land of cowborn Danaus to Helen's island and to the Pallenean prophet,
 shepherd of seals [sc. Proteus].

The *Victory for Berenice* opens with a description of Argos as the 'land of cow-born Danaus', an allusion designed to link Egypt and Argos through their common ancestor—Danaus. Certainly scholars have pointed out that the opening of this epinician it calls attention to Berenice's Argive Greek roots. But it also constructs a genealogy that makes the queen 'Egyptian.' The phrase 'holy blood of the sibling gods' starts the process. The allusions to 'Helen's island', which is the Pharos, and the Pallenean prophet both insist on the Alexandrian location and sketch out allusively a migration from Greece (for Helen) and Thrace (for Pallenean Proteus) to the new foundation.

A few lines later in an unfortunately broken passage Callimachus mentions Argives, Colchians, weaving and the Nile, hinting at another genealogical wrinkle:

καὶ πάρος Ἀργεῖ[
 καιρωτους τε[
 Κολχίδες ἢ Νείλω[ι
 15 λεπταλέους ἔξυσαν].[
 εἰδυῖαι φαλιδόν ταῦρον ἠλεμίσαι

and Argive[...Colchians or Nile...scrape the elegant? Women who know
 how to mourn the bull with the white markings

Could the presence of Colchians allude to the fact that long after Egyptian Danaus left Egypt for Greece, an Egyptian pharaoh—according to Herodotus—conquered the eastern Mediterranean and remnants of his army settled in Colchis? Colchians are therefore descended from Egyptians, and that accounts for why they weave in similar ways—2.105). This, of course, is merest speculation, but 'women who know how to mourn the bull with the white markings' is not. This is a reference to the festival mourning the death of the Apis bull. On the one hand, it is a chronological marker—an Egyptian analogue to the Greek habit of dating by Olympiads or other festival cycles. Egyptians dated by reigns of the Apis bull, and in fact the reigning bull had died in 247, shortly before Berenice's victory.¹⁶ But the reference to the Apis is more than a clever allusion to bi-cultural chronologies. 'Danaus' is 'cow-born' because he was the descendent of Io, and also of Epaphus—her son by Zeus—whom the Egyptians identified with the Apis, and who was certainly so identified in early Alexandria. Thus Callimachus recalls the intimate genealogical link between Greece and Egypt, and hints at the series of migrations: Io from Argos to Egypt; Danaus from Egypt to Argos; and Danaus' Argive descendents to Macedon; Macedonian Ptolemy to Egypt, where his descendent, Berenice II, now returns in triumph, to Argos. This

¹⁶ D. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (Princeton, 1988) 284-5.

was not apparently a fleeting allusion: the recently published PSI 15.1500,¹⁷ a fragment that fits directly after the opening section reads:

Ἴναχ[ίδα]ις κει[
 δωδ[ε]κάκις περὶ ἴδιφρον ἐπήγαγεν ὄθματα δίφρου
 καὶ τ[.]. Ἀμυμών[η
 5 κρή[ν]η καλὰ νάουσα κ[
 δρωμ[ῶ]σιν· Δαναοῦ δε[
 ἰπα[στ]ῆρ' ἄτε τοῦτο φει[
 Αἴγυπτος γενεῆς αἴμ' α[
 10 δηθάκ[ι] μου τὸν Νεῖλο[ν
 κείνος ος ἐμ Προίτου ξ[
 ὧς ἔνεπεν· τοι δ' ἦχον[
]νκ
 ἐκ λαγόνων [..].θερ[

No line permits complete restoration, but the names: Inachides, Amymone (one of Danaus' daughters), Danaus, Aegyptus, and Proitos, a descendent of Danaus, (the grandfather of Perseus and ancestor of Heracles), are sure indications that the victory provided Callimachus with an occasion for an extended reminder to his audience of the complex interrelationships of Greek and Egyptian as instantiated in the Ptolemaic line, in a way that is not unlike the genealogical opening of Euripides' *Archelaus*.

3. The local environs

If Argive ancestors served to connect the royal house and the new place with mainland Greece, and a Greece that was in the mists of the past already Egyptian, the immediate experience of immigrants from diverse cities meant that no one patron divinity was (like Spartan Apollo was for Cyrene) an exact fit for the new city. This might well account for the lack of temples to major Olympian deities¹⁸ and the installation of the cult Sarapis as city patron, or the fact that those Olympians who do appear, for example, Demeter, had rites that, like the *Thesmophoria*, were not locally specific, but were celebrated in many Greek cities (including Cyrene). Though with Demeter, it is worth noting that Herodotus (2. 171) had claimed that the daughters of Danaus taught the Pelasgian women to first celebrate the *Thesmophoria*, so Demeter and the *Thesmophoria*, if it was indeed celebrated in the third-century city, may have

¹⁷ Fr. 144 Massimilla (this is a combination of fr. 674 Pf. and the new find).

¹⁸ Although Arrian (3.1.5) claims that Alexander marked out temples to the the Greek gods Egyptian Isis should be, his language (ἱερὰ ὅσα καὶ θεῶν ὄντων, τῶν μὲν Ἑλληνικῶν, Ἴσιδος δὲ Αἰγυπτίας) does not instill confidence that he had any specific knowledge. In contrast, Tacitus (*hist.* 4.83.1) says that it was the Ptolemies who were responsible for building the city's walls, temples, and cults, and he discusses no Olympians, only the cult of Serapis.

been encouraged or imported precisely because of a supposed previous Greco-Egyptian connection.¹⁹

The known Alexandrian temples well represented in Callimachus' poetry. The Cape Zephyrium temple, dedicated by Callicrates of Samos to Arsinoe-Aphrodite, appears in both in the nautilus epigram (ep. 14 GP = 5 Pf.) and in the elegy on the *Lock of Berenice* (fr. 110. 57 Pf.). It is in that temple that the lock was dedicated, and from it translated into the heavens. A related catasterism seems to have taken place from Arsinoe's mortuary temple, according to the diegesis of the now fragmentary *Apotheosis for Arsinoe* (X.10 ad fr. 228 Pf.). Apparently Callimachus mentioned an altar and temenos for Arsinoe near the emporion from which the Dioscuri transported her (after her death) to the heavens. This mortuary temple, later described by Pliny (34.148), seems to have had a vaulted ceiling, somehow magnetized, so that a statue of the dead queen could be seen to rise (attracted up by her iron hair). One wonders if the prospect of a temple in which one could see the queen ascending is what prompted the poetic details. To adorn this temple Ptolemy had an obelisk, originally carved in the reign of a Nectanebo, transported from elsewhere in Egypt, the size of which must have been awe-inspiring. It is worth noting that the poetic representation of each of these temples plays out the same geographic trajectory discussed earlier. In Callimachus' famous epigram on the nautilus, the dedicated shell comes from Iulis in Ceos (whose harbor had been renamed Arsinoe) to the Cape Zephyrium temple, thus another example of the drift towards the new city and its environs, while the *Apotheosis* is narrated in such a way that Arsinoe's dead sister (Philotera) can look from Mt. Athos towards Egypt, from Alexandria to Thebes, and observe the whole of it clothed in mourning. In the *Lock of Berenice*, Mt. Athos is described as Arsinoe's obelisk (fr. 110. 45: βουπόρος)—this could, of course, be an allusion to the obelisk brought to Arsinoe's mortuary temple (though that cannot be determined from the now fragmentary context). But at the very least it re-figures a Greek landscape (Mt. Athos) in Egyptian terms.²⁰

In the epigram (*Ep.* 18 GP = 57 Pf.) mentioned earlier, where Callimachus identifies Io and Isis, the poem commemorates a dedication in an Isis temple. According to Arrian Alexander himself ordered the construction of an Isis temple in Alexandria, and from documentary evidence we know that a festival to Isis (*Iseia*) was celebrated in the city quite early (at least the 250s).²¹ Callimachus also mentions a temple in Canopus (*Ep.* 16 GP = 55 Pf.). This is likely to be the temple to Serapis dedicated by Ptolemy III and Berenice II. (The temple was famous, and a fragment attributed to Apollonius' poem on Canopus may have described its columns.) A second epigram (*Ep.* 17 GP = 37 Pf.) describes a dedication to Serapis from a Cretan from Lyctus.

¹⁹ F. Perpillou-Thomas, *Fêtes d'Égypte ptolémaïque et romaine d'après la documentation papyrologique grecque* (Louvain, 1993) 78-81.

²⁰ It is interesting that Posidippus reverses this gesture in the epigram on the Pharos, by making the Pharos the equivalent of mountain watch towers on Greek islands (*Ep.* 11 GP = 115 A-B).

²¹ F. Perpillou-Thomas 1993: 94-7.

This dedication refers either to same Canopic shrine to Serapis or to the Serapeum in Alexandria. In either case, the journey of individual and dedicated object, like the nautilus epigram reinforces the pull towards the new place.

Callimachus insists he that does not travel (fr. 178. 32-3 Pf.), though this may not have been factually accurate, if an Athenian inscription that lists one Callimachus as a donor to a special fund for the salvation of the city does indeed refer to our poet.²² Callimachus' fictional assertions, however, serve to reinforce the there-ness of the new place. In his poems, Callimachus repeatedly places himself at an Alexandrian/North African center, by highlighting the directional flow, whether of divinities and kings, as we have seen in the first and fourth hymns, or in his epinicia for Berenice and for Sosibius, where word comes to him in the city of victories at Nemea and Isthmia, or in his *Aetia*. The *Aetia* opens with the poet in Libya (whether Cyrene or Alexandria); in fr. 178, which is with some probability now located at the beginning of book 2, we find him at a dinner party, carefully noted as 'in Egypt', though hosted by an immigrant Athenian (which equally traces a migration south). The third book opens with word of Berenice's Nemean victory coming to the poet in Egypt. The *Aetia* ends, of course, in Alexandria.

The iambs are equally Alexandria-centered: the 13th iambus opens with an accusation of some rancor placed into the mouths of Callimachus' critics, apparently to the effect that he had not gone to Ephesus and thus not properly prepared himself to write Hipponactan invective. Callimachus ends the poem with a ringing claim that yes, he is writing iambs without having gone to Ephesus.

Without mingling with Ionians or going to Ephesus, whence those who are going to write limping meters take fire not without skill (*Iamb.* 13. 11-4).

The reason that Callimachus does not need to go to Ephesus is that (de facto) Ephesus had come to him. In the first *Iambus* he conjured up the long dead Hipponax, who returns from the Underworld to chastise quarrelsome critics in Alexandria: he summons them to the temple outside of the walls (and this by the way is the earliest reference we have to Alexandria's walls):

Come, gather at the shrine before the wall where the old man who fabricated Panchaian Zeus chatters and scratches out his unrighteous books (*Iamb.* 1. 9-11).

This temple was Parmenio's Serapeum (according to the *Diegete*), where Euhemerus is scratching out his unrighteous books. Euhemerus was an older contemporary of Callimachus, whose *Sacred Register* turned Zeus into a mortal who became a god via extraordinary services to mankind. This episode is not just marked locally, it is marked in a particularly tendentious way. Euhemerus (whether the man himself or a

²² Callimachus the poet and benefactor of the Athenians. G. Oliver *ZPE* 140 (2002) 6-8.

statue) is in front of a uniquely Alexandrian space—a temple to Serapis. This was not the Great temple, but an earlier one, the existence of which is independently attested by a papyrus letter of 256. That Hipponax can speak, where he can speak is not only a manifestation of Callimachus' poetic powers, it is surely dependent on the fact that if Hipponax has come physically to Alexandria, he can have done so only as a roll in the new Library. In Ephesus, the limping iambic may once have, but surely no longer breathed out its vituperative fire. Hipponax was dead and no longer part of a living tradition; the later poet writing iambic in his name can only learn his craft from a roll.

In creating a shared past and a collective identity for Alexandria, Callimachus, much more than his contemporaries, speaks in his own voice and constantly reminds us of where he is. Callimachus does not travel to other places in his poetry—he visits Helicon not in person but in a dream, athletic victories come to him as the celebrant in North Africa. This deliberate strategy of rootedness gives a poetic voice to the new place and a center to his poetic wanderings throughout the Mediterranean via the individual *aitia*. It acts as a centripetal force to draw all towards this new place. Callimachus' poetic position is analogous to his role within the library, as texts flow in from around the Greek-speaking Mediterranean. Just as he can shape and order the poetic past in his *Pinakes*, so he can, by his poetry, choose how to recall and what to recall from among the multitude of stories that flow to this new center with the peoples and their books. In writing about his new world, Callimachus creates a sense of Alexandria as a common place with archive of shared images that are not at all the same as those of classical Athens or even Libyan Cyrene. Nothing makes that clearer than the poem now located at the end of the *Aetia*. On the surface a witty and sophisticated tribute to the queen's affection for her husband, in reality the poem celebrates the reunification of Cyrene and Alexandria via the marriage of Berenice II and Ptolemy III. The catasterism of Berenice's lock is not just proleptic of the queen's future deification (though it is that), it is also marks the historical coming of age of the reign of the Ptolemies. Their science and their poets are now in the position to rename the stars.

