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# HELLENISTIC POETRY IN CONTEXT

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COURTLY LOVE, STARS AND POWER:  
THE QUEEN IN THIRD-CENTURY ROYAL COUPLES,  
THROUGH POETRY AND EPIGRAPHIC TEXTS\*

Stefano G. CANEVA

**1. *Eros* between *eris* and *homonoia*. Courtly love in poetry and in ideology.**

At the beginning of the third book of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, Aphrodite tries to convince Eros to aim one of his arrows at Medea, so that she will help Jason to get the golden fleece. To urge her intractable son to cooperate, Aphrodite offers him a wonderful reward:

Εἰ δ' ἄγε μοι πρόφρων τέλεσον χρέος ὅττι κεν εἶπω·  
καί κέν τοι ὀπάσαιμι Διὸς περικαλλὲς ἄθυρμα  
κεῖνο τό οἱ ποίησε φίλη τροφὸς Ἴαδρήστεια  
ἄνθρω ἐν Ἰδαίῳ ἔτι νήπια κουρίζοντι,  
σφαῖραν εὐτρόχαλον, τῆς οὐ σύ γε μείλιον ἄλλο  
χειρῶν Ἥφαιστοιο κατακτεατίσση ἄρειον.  
Χρύσεια μὲν οἱ κύκλα τετεύχεται, ἀμφὶ δ' ἐκάστω  
διπλόαι ἀψίδες περιηγέες εἰλίσσονται·  
κρυπταὶ δὲ ῥαφαί εἰσιν, ἕλιξ δ' ἐπιδέδρομε πάσαις  
κυανέη· ἀτὰρ εἴ μιν ἑαῖς ἐνὶ χερσὶ βάλοιο,  
ἀστὴρ ὡς φλεγέθοντα δι' ἠέρος ὀλκὸν ἴησι.<sup>1</sup>

Although Eros playing with a ball is a topical scene,<sup>2</sup> the technical terms adopted by Apollonius and the strict coherence with the astronomical lexicon of Aratus' *Phaenomena* clarify that we are dealing with a learned variation of a traditional theme: the toy that Adrasteia built for Zeus is a

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1. *Arg.* III.131-141: "Listen now: if you're willing to do the job I tell you, I'll give you one of Zeus' most beautiful playthings, that his dear nurse Adrasteia fashioned for him when he was still a babbling infant in that cave on Ida: a quick-moving ball, than which you'll get no better toy, not even from Hephaistos' hands. Its rings have been fashioned of gold, and over each are basted twin segment-edges, all the way round, with seams camouflaged, since over each one runs a spiral pattern of cobalt. If you toss this ball up to catch it, like a meteor it unleashes a gleamy airy trail" (translation partly adapted from Green [1997: 116]).

2. See references in Hunter (1989: 113).

*simulacrum* of an armilla, a mechanism reproducing the movement of celestial spheres.<sup>3</sup> Rather than simply illustrating the learned vein of the *Argonautica*, the resonances between Apollonius' narrative and Aratus' astronomical poem seem to carry deeper allegorical implications for the roles of Zeus and Eros within the *kosmos*. According to Stoic physics, Zeus is the active principle of universal order, including the regular movement of the heavens. Accordingly, Apollonius' infant Zeus, playing with a model of the *kosmos*, seems to allude to the god's role as the governor of universe, as is pointed out in Aratus' prooemium and in Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*.<sup>4</sup> However, since the era of Kronos precedes the advent of Zeus' order,<sup>5</sup> the *Argonautica* shows the governing role of the god only in its apprenticeship: baby Zeus trains for his divine task while the name of his nurse, Adrasteia, points to the inevitability of his future divine order.<sup>6</sup>

The promise to give Eros the cosmic toy suggests thus the risk that the force of passion will establish its control over the world, challenging Zeus' order and harmony. A close, threatening link between *erōs*, rulership, and strife emerges throughout Apollonius' poem, ranging from the relations between characters to a philosophical and cosmological level.<sup>7</sup>

3. The rotating rings in Apollonius' model correspond to the circumferences dividing the celestial vault in Aratus. For the general description of the rings, cf. *Phaen.* 460-468, 477-479; the tropics: 480-511; the equator: 511-524; the ecliptic: 525-528; the cosmic model made by the artisan of Athena: 529-533. The terms employed by Apollonius (κύκλα, *Arg.* III.137; ἀψίδες περιηγέες εἰλίσσονται, III.138; ῥαφαί and ἔλιξ, III.139) are technical. The expression περιηγέες εἰλίσσονται occurs in Aratus, *Phaen.* 401, where it refers to the stars that move underneath Sagittarius' forefeet. Furthermore, the adjective εὐτρόχαλον (III.135) referring to Zeus' toy does not simply allude to its perfect spherical shape, but matches Aratus' τροχάλεια (*Phaen.* 530), which qualifies the rotating κύκλα of the cosmic model. The translation "quick-moving sphere" is then preferable to "well rounded", Green (1997: 116), or "perfectly round", Race (2008: 227). Finally, *Arg.* III.132-135 reminds of Aratus' description of Zeus' childhood at mount Ida (*Phaen.* 31-35; cf. Martin [1998<sup>2</sup>: I 72-91]). Thus Zeus' ball appears to be not only of "cosmic significance" (Hunter [1989: 114]), but a properly astronomical model: see also Vian (2002<sup>2</sup>: ad III.140); Campbell (1994: 120-129); Caneva (2007: 81-82).

4. In Arat. *Phaen.* 1-18, the focus is on the link between Zeus and the Zodiac. Cleanthes' *Hymn* (Cleanthes 537 von Arnim) stresses this point more clearly: cf. ll. 7-8, σοὶ δὴ πᾶς ὄδε κόσμος ἐλίσσόμενος περὶ γαίαν | πείθεται ἢ κεν ἄγῃς, καὶ ἐκὼν ὑπὸ σεῖο κρατεῖται ("This whole universe, spinning around the earth, truly obeys to wherever you lead, and is readily ruled by you", trans. Thom [2005: 40, cf. 70-72]). On Aratus' prooemium, see Martin (1998<sup>2</sup>: II 137-152); Bénatouïl (2005). On Cleanthes' *Hymn*, cf. also Meijer (2007: 209-228); Bénatouïl (2009). On the "beginning from Zeus" tradition in third-century poetry, cf. Hunter (2003: 96-99).

5. See Hunter (1993: 162-169); Clauss (2000); Caneva (2007: 77-82).

6. On Adrasteia as Zeus' nurse, cf. Call. *H.* I.46-49.

7. Mori (2008: esp. 52-60); Daniel-Muller (2012:285-293). On the role of love and strife in Empedocles' cosmology, see Martin – Primavesi (1999: 53-54, 57-61, 64-75,

The political dimension of *erōs* is evident in some historical precedents concerning the representation of Greek leadership within the polis. The controversial fifth-century Athenian leader Alcibiades used to bear a shield depicting Eros with a thunderbolt, implying that he combined the irresistible charm of the god with the traditional attribute of Zeus' power.<sup>8</sup> A master of political *kairos* and *charisma* such as Alcibiades might also have come to mind to the Athenians when, in 291 or 290 BC, the famous ithyphallic hymn composed for the triumphal arrival of Demetrios to Athens described the king as the son Aphrodite, i.e. Eros.<sup>9</sup> Coming back to the *Argonautica*, the ambiguous position of love between *eris* and *homonoia* and the consequent criticism of violent passions play an important part in the representation of leadership in Apollonius' poem and, as a consequence, in the role of marriage and of women in its fictional society. Starting from these considerations, I discuss in this paper the role of women and *erōs* in court poetry, by focusing on the ruling pair – the couple *par excellence* – and arguing that a gentle, reciprocal love within the bonds of marriage is presented as a crucial value, ensuring wealth and social order within the kingdom as well as the continuity of the dynasty itself. After focusing on how relations between characters shape the role of the queen in Alexandrian court poetry, I turn to non-literary, epigraphic evidence, in order to show how poetic representations of royal love integrated into a wider ideological program. As I argue below, this model was also reflected in the emulation of the royal couple by members of the court elite. Although my study mainly concerns Ptolemaic ruling couples, I discuss some epigraphic parallels from the Seleucid dynasty

87-89); for echoes in Apollonius, cf. Kyriakou (1994); Nelis (1992: 157-158); Caneva (2011). The link between *erōs* and *eris* in Apollonius' poem is emblematically portrayed on the central scene of Jason's cloak, where Aphrodite looks at herself reflected on Ares' shield (*Arg.* I.742-746). For parallels in iconography, see Vian (2002<sup>2</sup>: *ad* I.746). On the tradition of *Venus armata*, see Pirenne-Delforge (1994: 199-211, 446-454); Pironti (2007: 209-278). In Apollonius, the scene may allude to the efficiency of Jason's erotic diplomacy, particularly in Lemnos, but also to the risks underlying the strategic use of such an overpowering force as *erōs*: cf. Caneva (2011). On Jason's cloak as the symbol of a new, Alexandrian heroic model, see Hunter (1993: 48, 52); Mori (2008: 102-113), who interprets the allusiveness of the depicted scenes from the twofold perspective of intertextual reference to Achilles' shield and of historical comparison with Hellenistic royal cloaks.

8. Plut. *Alc.* 16.1; Athen. 12.534 E. See Hunter (1993: 56) and Mori (2008: 106).

9. The text is transmitted by Demochares *FGrH* 75 F 2 and Duris *FGrH* 76 F 13 = Athen. 6.253 B-F. On the hymn, see most recently Chaniotis (2011) and Versnel (2011: 444-456). That the king is the son of Poseidon and Aphrodite is stated at ll. 13-14. For a possible explanation of Demetrios' identification with Eros, see esp. Chaniotis (2011: 184-185).

as well, so that some general observations can be made on the representation of early Hellenistic queenship.<sup>10</sup>

As we shall see, coherence can be demonstrated between poetic vocabulary and imagery and its non-literary counterpart. However, listing similarities is not satisfactory, as it might result into disregarding the distinctive features of poetic discourse. As Claude Calame has argued for myths in Greek poetry, every formulation of ideological topics is the result of a specific communicative act, whose pragmatics draw on discursive conventions. These are related to media, genres, and the socio-cultural traits of their public.<sup>11</sup> Thus, when comparing poetic and epigraphic sources on the queen's role in royal couples, we should be aware of the textual codes that set a common ideological pattern into a specific context and that – in literature more than in documentary texts – always display the marks of the author's choices.

## 2. The fictional royal couple and its setting: the *thalamos* of Alcinous and Arete.

Epic conventions do not allow the reader of the *Argonautica* to find direct hints at the author's extradiscursive world. Instead of discussing directly topics related to the contemporary world, epic poetry projects them against the mythic past of the poem.<sup>12</sup> This makes the *Argonautica* a suitable starting point for this study because it allows us to work with a 'vacuum-packed' narrative, where a valuable paradigm for contemporary royal couples emerges out of the fictional world, through its characters and their relations.

Upon their arrival at Drepane, the Argonauts are pressed by an imminent threat: Aietes' forces have reached them and are ready to unleash battle to bring Medea back to her father.<sup>13</sup> Alcinous proposes himself as a mediator and suggests replacing strife with a judgement that may bring

10. A wide, fast increasing bibliography on the political role of Macedonian royal women is available. See the general discussions by Ogden (1999); Carney (1991; 1995; 2000; 2006; 2010; 2011; 2013); Mirón Pérez (2000); Bielman (2002); Savalli-Lestrade (2003); Bertholet – Bielman – Frei-Stolba (2008); Caneva (2013).

11. See, most recently, the introductions to Calame 2006 and 2009.

12. On Apollonius' use of narrative devices like *aitia*, which allow the author to hint at his time by referring to the persistency of *sēmata* from the mythic time "to the present day", see Fusillo (1985: 116-142); Caneva (2007: 73-76, 123-128).

13. *Arg.* IV.982-1222. For discussion of the Phaeacian episode, see Hunter (1993: 68-74); Knight (1995: 244-257); Kyriakou (1995: 156-168); Mori (2001; 2008: 113-139; 2008b: 157-159).

νείκεα to an end.<sup>14</sup> Before sunset, Medea tries to convince Arete to intercede with the king and reminds the Argonauts of their moral duties. The heroes must protect Medea, since her help in the quest of the fleece has resulted in her exile and will bring dishonour upon her, if she is brought back to Colchis.<sup>15</sup> What follows, the night council of the royal couple in the *thalamos*, is the crucial moment of the episode and the section where Apollonius has most intensely rewritten his Homeric model. In the *Odyssey*, Arete plays a prominent role by publicly interceding for Odysseus in front of the Phaeacians and inducing Alcinous to help the guest.<sup>16</sup> However, Apollonius changes the setting of her mediation, replacing the public context of the Phaeacian chiefs' council with the intimacy of the royal bedroom:

Τὼ δ' ἔντοσθε δόμοιο κατὰ πτόλιν, ὡς τὸ πάροιθεν,  
 κρείων Ἀλκίνοος πολυπότνια τ' Ἀλκινόοιο  
 Ἄρητη ἄλοχος κούρης πέρι μητιάσκειν  
 οἷσιν ἐνὶ λεχέεσσι διὰ κνέφας<sup>17</sup>

Admittedly, the omission of the council scene seems to deprive Arete of her public influence by making her draw back to a more segregated space. In fact, the result is quite the opposite. In the *Odyssey*, Arete's intercession needs to be sanctioned by Echeneus, who, as a master of ceremony, approves the queen's suggestion and submits it to Alcinous' decision.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, in the *Argonautica*, Arete's arguments reach her husband's attention directly.<sup>19</sup> Besides, the phrase ὡς τὸ πάροιθεν introduces an intertextual hint at the Homeric literary past.<sup>20</sup> Homer depicted the Phaeacian couple while entering the marriage bed, whereas Apollonius – as Richard Hunter said – “writes this missing scene for us”.<sup>21</sup> Arete tries to

14. *Arg.* IV.1008-1010.

15. See respectively *Arg.* IV.1011-1029 and IV.1030-1057.

16. *Od.* VII.66-71 already depicts Arete and Alcinous as the perfect couple. On the *thalamos* as the heart of the royal house in the *Odyssey*, see also Vernant (1973: 70-74).

17. *Arg.* IV.1068-1071: “In the city, retired in their palace, as before, the royal couple – lordly Alcinous, and the great lady, Arete, Alcinous's wife – were debating, in bed, over Medeia, in the dark” (transl. Green [1997: 179]). For a comparison between Arete's role in Homer and Apollonius, see Hunter (1993: 70-71); Kyriakou (1995: 156-157); Mori (2001: 92-97). The removal of the other Phaeacian *basileis* seems to update the fictional setting by modelling Alcinous' court on the contemporary Hellenistic ones.

18. *Od.* XI.344-346.

19. Arete's prestige is marked out by the attribute *πολυπότνια*, a rare epithet elsewhere reserved for Demeter (*H.H.* II.211; *Ar. Thesm.* 1155-1156; *H. Orph.* 40.16). It occurs twice elsewhere in the poem, referring to the mother-goddess Cybele/Rhea (*Arg.* I.1125, 1151); cf. Hunter (1993: 70, n. 96).

20. *Od.* VII.344-347.

21. Hunter (1993: 71), also quoted by Mori (2001: 95).

win Alcinous to Medea's cause with a political argument (the close ties with the Haemonians) and some additional personal ones: empathy with Medea's suffering, commitment for Jason's oath, and the need to avoid the consequences of irrational wrath, to which fathers are often subject in myth.<sup>22</sup> In his reply, Alcinous' focus on political matters is made evident in his concern about the consequences of acting openly against Aietes. Accordingly, he offers a diplomatic solution: Medea will be given back to the Colchians only if she is still a virgin.<sup>23</sup> Immediately after saying that, Alcinous falls asleep, leaving Arete to handle the unaddressed personal considerations. The queen sends a messenger urging the Argonauts to celebrate the marriage as soon as possible.<sup>24</sup> Francis Vian interpreted this scene as an Alexandrian revision of Hera's deception of Zeus,<sup>25</sup> while Anatole Mori argued that Alcinous' sleep is more a sign of his serenity and trust in his wife, who is allowed to share his judgement and to act in accordance with it.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Arete's plan to avert suffering and shame for Medea is not a rebellious one, because it was suggested by Hera. Thus, what was in the *Iliad* outright defiance of the god-king on the part of the goddess-queen, in the *Argonautica* has become a tendency for the queen to find effective responses to diplomatic impasses and to cooperate in her personal way with the king for the best solution of a problematic situation.<sup>27</sup>

The Phaeacian episode is important for two reasons. On the one hand, the wedding on Drepane points to an (at least temporary) escape from the destructive link between *erōs* and *neikos*, as it offers a chance to control socially dangerous passions by bringing them within the limit of social order and harmony.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the wedding's contractual value establishes an agreement between the two parties (the Argonauts and the Colchians), extending order and reconciliation from individuals to groups, that is from ethics to politics. On the other hand, this reconciliation could not have happened without the mediation of the royal couple, who when faced with such a complex situation, restored peace through complementary team play based on a clear division of roles. A final, intriguing aspect of

22. *Arg.* IV.1073-1095.

23. *Arg.* IV.1098-1109.

24. *Arg.* IV.1110-1120.

25. Vian (2002<sup>2</sup>: *ad* IV.1072).

26. Mori (2001: 96-97).

27. *Arg.* IV.1199-1200.

28. On the criticism against violent emotions in the *Argonautica*, see Mori (2007; 2008: 117, 120-122); on the role played by marriage in ensuring social order, Mori (2008: 92-93, 127-139).



the episode comes from considering that, at least in a part of the tradition, Arete and Alcinous are siblings.<sup>29</sup> This could add a learned reference to the Ptolemaic royal couple, whose official claim to sibling union (whether kinship was, from case to case, real or ideological) created political advantages but needed some mythic and cultic precedents in pursuit of legitimation, at least from a Greek perspective.<sup>30</sup> However, the private setting of the *thalamos*, where the queen has direct influence on her husband, remains the most relevant point to our present purpose: an aspect that closely parallels the meeting of Hebe and Heracles in Theocritus' *Idyll* 17, the *Encomium of Ptolemy*.

### 3. The logic of courtly love: Theocritus' *Encomium of Ptolemy*.

Theocritus' *Idylls* 15 and 17 share some encomiastic motifs concerning the ideological importance of reciprocal love for the royal couple.<sup>31</sup> In the *Encomium*, family ties within the dynasty are made clear by the spatial relations between the characters. This happens in the Olympian section of the poem, which is set on a double stage: the divine symposium and the *thalamos*. In the first part, which stages the banquet of the gods in the house of Zeus (ll. 17-27), proximity between characters portrays the close relationship existing within the divine lineage of the Ptolemies from Zeus down to the son of Lagos: the symposium is held in the residence

29. The scholiast of Hes. fr. 222 M-W attests this tradition, whereas in Homer Arete is Alcinous' niece (*Od.* 7.53-68).

30. On the parallel between Alcinous-Arete and Ptolemy-Arsinoe, see Hunter (1993: 161-162); Mori (2001). The Phaeacian pair provides a literary model for the Ptolemaic couple in Theoc. 17: cf. Hunter (2003: 128-129). Endogamic weddings can be found in many ancient dynasties, from Egypt, where royal full-sibling-marriages are attested (especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty; cf. Buraselis [2008] who, however, appears to have overestimated their importance in the Egyptian tradition), to the half-sibling-marriages documented in Achaemenid Persia and possibly archaic Macedonia; cf. Ogden (1999: 127-127), Müller (2009: 111-138). In the time of the Successors, royal endogamy responded to a shared need to strengthen new dynasties by redoubling the rulers' legitimation and reinforcing internal family bonds against the feuds that arose between the sons of different mothers within the framework of royal polygamous marriages; cf. Carney (2013: 70-82) with further refs.

31. Presumably this was also the case of the lost *Berenice*, fr. 3 Gow; cf. Weber (1993: 252-254). On *Idylls* 15 and 17, see Griffiths (1979: 71-86; 1981); Weber (1993: 213-243); Burton (1995: 62-82, 133-154); Stephens (2003: 147-170); Hunter (1996: 110-138; 1996b: esp. 158-166; 2003); Daniel-Muller (2012:278-283); Caneva (2012; 2013). Although these poems suggest that the model of reciprocal love was transmitted from the first to the second ruling couple, it is more probable that Ptolemy and Arsinoe invented this ideological motif during their reign and legitimated it by projecting it on their predecessors: cf. Caneva (2014b: Chapter 4).

of Zeus who, as Ptolemy's father,<sup>32</sup> has made him a man "equal in honours even to the blessed immortals",<sup>33</sup> a sentence which corresponds to the contemporary dedication of ἰσόθεοι τιμαί to rulers.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Zeus has given Ptolemy I a golden throne, where he sits while participating in the banquet of the gods.<sup>35</sup> The position of the characters reaches now its highest significance: Ptolemy has Alexander on his side (l. 18, παρὰ δ' αὐτῶν) portrayed as the conqueror of the Persian Orient and "kindly disposed" (φίλα εἰδώς) to his relative, while Heracles sits in front of both (l. 20, ἀντία).<sup>36</sup> Therefore the text depicts Heracles as the mediator between Alexander and Ptolemy, on the one hand, and the other immortals, on the other. By combining the spatial reference (l. 22, ἔνθα σὺν ἄλλοισιν θαλίας ἔχει Οὐρανίδησι) with the genealogical argument of ll. 23-27, Ptolemy and Alexander are given a shared Heraclid ancestry.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, at the end of this section Zeus plays the same function as in the opening line: he promotes the divine honours granted to the Ptolemies,

32. Theoc. 17.16.

33. Trans. Hunter (2003). On Theocritus playing with heroes, hemitheoi, men and gods so as to perform a progressive transfer of his patrons from a human to a semidivine status, see Fantuzzi (2001); Hunter (2003: 100-102).

34. See Hunter (2003: 111). On ruler cults, Cerfaux – Tondriau (1957) is now out of date for many aspects; Habicht (1970<sup>2</sup>) is still worth mentioning, although it needs integrations from newly published inscriptions and papyri. On the typologies of cultic honours, worshippers, and status of honoured kings and queens, see Walbank (1987); Hauben (1989); Van Nuffelen (1998/1999); Buraselis (2003); Chaniotis (2003; 2007; 2011); Mari (2008); Pfeiffer (2008); Erskine (2010); Muccioli (2011; 2013); Iossif – Chankowski – Lorber (2011); Caneva (2012; 2014; 2014b; 2014c).

35. I follow Bergk's emendation θρόνος (l. 17) instead of the transmitted δόμος; see Hunter (2003: 112-113). Soter's chryselephantine throne was exhibited in Philadelphus' Grand Procession (Athen. 5.202 A-B; Rice [1983: 116-117]). On chryselephantine statuary, see Lapatin (2001; 2010). The evidence from the age of the Successors shows that, in the Macedonian tradition, the throne, albeit empty, hints by itself at the persistence of the royal function. For Perdikkas' council in Babylon, see Curt. 10.6.4, 10.7.13; for the later case of Eumenes, see Plut. *Eum.* 13.3-4; Diod. 18.60.4-61.3, 19.15.3-4; Nepos, *Eum.* 7.2-3; Polyæn. 4.8.2. On the role of Alexander's corpse in the time of the Successors, cf. Meeus (2009). In Theocritus' poem, the dynastic significance of the throne combines with the literary tradition of divine banquets: cf. Hunter (2003: 110, 112-113). Accordingly, the setting is moved from earth, where only the empty throne of the dead king can be displayed, to heaven, where both the royal and Olympian implications of the golden throne are associated with the deified Ptolemy.

36. Again, a fitting parallel to the close association between Ptolemy, Alexander, and a god related to the Ptolemaic house is provided by the Grand Procession, at the section displaying "statues of Alexander and Ptolemy with ivy crowns of gold. The statue of Arete beside Ptolemy had a golden olive crown. Priapus, having an ivy crown of gold, was also present with them. The city of Corinth, standing by Ptolemy, was crowned with a golden diadem"; Athen. 5.201D; trans. adapted from Rice (1983: 21; cf. 107-110). For discussion of this scene, cf. Caneva (2014b: Chapter 3).

37. Huttner (1997: 65-123; 124-220) discusses the propagandistic use of Heracles' figure by the Argeads and later Hellenistic dynasties.

whose lineage is now associated with the Argead line through Alexander and the common ancestor Heracles.

This same trio introduces the second scene of the diptych, which is set in Hebe's divine *thalamos* (ll. 28-33). After banqueting, Heracles is accompanied by Alexander and Ptolemy to his wife's bedroom and entrusts them with his weapons, the bow with the quiver and the club. The tone of the scene seems to adapt Heracles to a new, courtly context: Heracles leaves the banquet without excesses as a "reformed and much quieter character", as Richard Hunter observed, fitting the etiquette of Hellenistic royal banquets.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, the fact that Heracles enters his wife's bedroom unarmed is an exception in the traditional iconography of the hero, who carries his weapons even when portrayed with Hebe.<sup>39</sup> The *thalamos* – the traditional core setting of marital intimacy – plays therefore a prominent role in the representation of the divine couple, but it also introduces the following section of the poem, which abruptly switches from Hebe to her human counterpart, Soter's wife Berenice (ll. 34-57).

Here the narrative strategy shifts from the spatial arrangements of the Olympian scene to an explanation of the role of love in the royal couple: Berenice I's outstanding charm, which was bestowed on her directly by Aphrodite, explains Ptolemy's devotion to his wife. By requiting his love, Berenice I ensured the trust bonds that make a house flourish and, as a consequence of her behaviour, she was given divine status by Aphrodite.<sup>40</sup> Just as for the Hesiodic motif of αἰδοῖοι βασιλῆες (see ll. 73-75), Theocritus draws here on traditional values to fashion his portrait of the Ptolemaic queen: Berenice I's devoted and requiting love, as well as the benefits she bestows on both her parents and children by means of her wise behaviour, go back to the traditional wisdom of archaic literature.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the theme of the sons' resemblance to their father symbolizes

38. Hunter (2003: 121-122). On Hellenistic royal symposia, see Cameron (1995: 71-103); Murray (1996); Vössing (2004: 92-186). On re-writing Heracles in Hellenistic literature, cf. also Ambühl (2010).

39. Cf. *LIMC* s.v. *Herakles*. Admittedly, the club is the attribute that makes Heracles recognizable and as a consequence it could not be omitted on vases. However, Theocritus seems to rewrite this tradition according to the general atmosphere of his Olympian scene.

40. Poetic diction reflects the status of the deified queen as *synnaos thea* of the goddess. On the status of *synnaoi theoi*, cf. Nock (1930); Schmidt-Dounas (1993/1994). On the ruler cult for Ptolemaic queens, in general: Weber (1993: 251-270); Mirón Pérez (1998); Carney (2000b) (an expanded version of Carney [2000a: 209-225]); Caneva (2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2014a; 2014b; 2014c).

41. For the parallel with Semonides' 'bee woman' and for the hint at Penelope in the attribute πινυταῖσι (l. 34), see Hunter (2003: 124-126).

order within family and society as early as Hesiod.<sup>42</sup> In Theocritus, the contrast between the wife who requites her husband's love (ll. 40-42) and the one who feels no affection for her husband – consequently thinking of other men (l. 43) and generating spurious children –, adapts Hesiod's theme to an essential aspect of the dynastic ideology: the son's ability to inherit his father's house and reign is tied to his father's preference for his mother and to his mother's fidelity to the king.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, Theocritus portrays the Ptolemaic house as an exceptional example of the fulfilment of this Hesiodic topos. By concluding the list of mythical parallels with a flattering *climax*, lines 56-57 almost conflate father and son in a *polyptoton*: σὲ δ' αἰχμητὰ Πτολεμαῖε / αἰχμητᾶ Πτολεμαίῳ ἀρίζηλος Βερενίκα.<sup>44</sup> Here the *climax* works also in another way by ordering the mentioned heroes from Diomedes, a man (l. 54, ἄνδρα) born of two mortal parents, to Achilles, who matches the opening definition of *hēmithēos* because his mother Thetis was a goddess, to end up with Ptolemy, both of whose parents have been granted divine status.<sup>45</sup> The importance of similarity among the members of the dynasty, as it is developed in the *Encomium*, is confirmed by some of Posidippus' encomiastic epigrams, where homonymy and the redundancy of familial links highlight the prestigious tradition of the Ptolemies in the field of horse races, which includes both male and female members of the family.<sup>46</sup>

The way in which Aphrodite expresses her preference for Berenice I marks an appreciable shift to the extradiscursive world. The text approaches the topic of apotheosis with a clear hint at contemporary cultic honours: while the preference of a goddess for a woman may be a standard celebration of female beauty, the infusion of Aphrodite's divine glamour in Berenice I's breast (ll. 36-37)<sup>47</sup> looks like a first step on the assimilating path that finally leads the queen to share a cult with the goddess. This is

42. See Hes. *Op.* 235, with the opposite case at l. 182 (in the prophecy on the fifth *genos*). Other occurrences of this theme are listed by West (1978: 199, 215-216).

43. Cf. Call. *H.* IV.170, in Apollo's second prophecy: ὁ [=Ptolemy] δ' εἴσεται ἥθεα πατρός.

44. "But Berenice bore you, warrior Ptolemy, to warrior Ptolemy." (my trans.); Cf. Müller (2009: 359-362).

45. See Griffiths (1979: 76).

46. See especially AB 78.3-10 and 88. On the relevance of Pan-Hellenic horse competitions in shaping the image of the Ptolemaic family, see Bing (2002/3); Bingen (2002; 2002b); Crisuolo (2003); Fantuzzi (2005); Kosmetatou (2004); Thompson (2005); Bennett (2005); Ambühl (2007); van Bremen (2007); Remijsen (2009); Barbantani (2012).

47. Cf. Hunter (2003: 128) for a list of parallels to the passage of divine fluids from gods to mortals, providing special skills or immortality. See also the irresistible beauty bestowed by Athena on Penelope with Aphrodite's balm, which is the closest precedent to Theocritus' passage (*Od.* XVIII.189-196). I owe the last reference to Maria Kanellou.

suggested by the parallel between this passage and the description of Berenice I's apotheosis in the hymnic section of *Idyll* 15:

Τᾷ μὲν Κύπρον ἔχοισα Διώνας πότνια κούρα  
κόλπον ἐς εὐώδη ῥαδινὰς ἐσεμάξατο χεῖρας  
17.36-37<sup>48</sup>

Κύπρι Διωναία, τὸ μὲν ἀθανάταν ἀπὸ θνατῆς,  
ἀνθρώπων ὡς μῦθος, ἐποίησας Βερενίκαν,  
ἀμβροσίαν ἐς στήθος ἀποστάξασα γυναικός  
15.106-108<sup>49</sup>

In both cases, Aphrodite promotes Berenice I's path towards divinization, but whereas in *Idyll* 15 posthumous deification is concerned, the *Encomium* establishes a cause-effect link between the infusion of divine charm and the extraordinary love that Ptolemy has devoted to his wife in her lifetime. In a way, Aphrodite has already made of Berenice I her living *eikōn*.<sup>50</sup> *Ambrosia* marks then the final passage of the process, transforming the queen into a benevolent goddess of gentle love and cares that are easy to bear (ll. 51-52).<sup>51</sup>

Although portrayed through different narrative strategies, the role of the queen clearly parallels that of the king. Just as Zeus assigns a bright fate to those kings about whom he cares (ll.73-76)<sup>52</sup> – and in Ptolemy's case he went so far as to bestow godlike honours on him as a man and to offer him a throne in heaven after his death – so Aphrodite infused her divine charm into Berenice I while she lived and then snatched her up from the underworld, granting her a temple and a cult. Nevertheless, this parallel does not work when divine ancestry is concerned: whereas both Lagos and Zeus are said to be Ptolemy's fathers, Berenice I is only the daughter of Antigone, while Cypris acts as her promoter.<sup>53</sup> On the other

48. "The controller of Cyprus, the powerful daughter of Dione, pressed her delicate hands upon Berenice's fragrant breast"; trans. Hunter (2003: 81).

49. "Cypris, Dione's child, you made mortal Berenice an immortal, so men say, sprinkling ambrosia on her woman's breast"; trans. Verity – Hunter (2002: 47-48).

50. See Gutzwiller (1995); Hunter (2003: 126-127). For the queen as a living *eikōn* of Aphrodite, cf. Asclep. 39 GP = AB 141; with the same epigrammatic tone, cf. Call. 15 GP (on Berenice and the *Charites*). On *Charites* and Ptolemaic queens, cf. Levin (2012).

51. See Hunter (2003: 127-128) on the quasi *oxymoron* κούρας ... μερίμνας. The stress on mitigating love pathos confirms that the criticism against violent passions is not a distinctive feature of Apollonius; rather, this aspect needs to be interpreted as the author's agreement with a value shared within the court. Overall, because emotional restraint is so socially relevant, it is chosen as a suitable theme for royal ideology.

52. On the Hesiodic echoes of the passage, see Hunter (2003: 152-153).

53. See ll. 14 (Λαγείδας Πτολεμαῖος) and 16 (πατήρ, said of Zeus) for Ptolemy. For Berenice, see l. 61 (Ἀντιγόνης θυγάτηρ). On this gap, see also Chaniotis (2011: 184): "Typically, Hellenistic kings have divine fathers, but not divine mothers". Berenice I acts

hand, the divinization of Ptolemy's parents allows Theocritus to consider the living king as an *hēmitheos* as well as to raise the tone of the flattery by equating the new couple to Zeus and Hera.<sup>54</sup>

This asymmetry between king Ptolemy I and queen Berenice I is hardly unintentional and deserves a longer discussion. For this purpose, the next two sections investigate the role of Aphrodite in the spread of female ruler cults, focusing respectively on poetry and epigraphic texts.

#### 4. Aphrodite and ruler cults in Alexandrian poetry.

Although it is possible that Berenice I had already been associated with Aphrodite in her lifetime, the ideological and cultic link between Ptolemaic queens and the goddess was special importance since the reign of Arsinoe II,<sup>55</sup> and may have been projected onto her predecessor *a*

as a goddess, namely as Leto, only when she performs her role of bringing Ptolemy II to birth in Cos. The birth of Ptolemy II is also linked to the favour of Apollo in Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos*. In Theocritus, the divine nature of the baby is ensured by the appearance of Zeus' sign, a huge eagle screaming three times. Although the association of eagles with royal houses is topical, some Ptolemaic parallels are worth mentioning: Posidippus' epigrams AB 27 and 31 describe the appearance of an eagle as a positive omen, respectively for a newborn baby and for Alexander against Persians; Ptolemaic coins from Ptolemy I onwards show an eagle on the reverse as a distinctive sign of the dynasty; the entry *Lagos* of the Byzantine lexicon *Suda* has the Ptolemaic eagle protect the baby Soter, son of Philip, having been exposed by Lagos after his birth. In addition to re-shaping rumours considering Ptolemy as Philip II's son in compliance with the narrative pattern of the chosen king, the story might mirror the Egyptian iconography of the holy falcon protecting the pharaoh, as suggested by Koenen (1993: 44-46). On the multiple fathers of Ptolemy I, see Collins (1997); Müller (2009: 182-185, 355); van Oppen (2013).

54. Theoc. 17.131-134. The association with the highest divine couple is paralleled by the identification of Arsinoe and Hera in the *Epithalamium of Arsinoe*, perhaps by Posidippus (*SH* 961 = AB 114). In addition, Callicrates dedicated a votive monument in Olympia consisting in two columns bearing the statues of the ruling pair, which were aligned so as to face the end-columns of the temple of Zeus and Hera: see Hintzen-Bohlen (1992: 77-81); Bing (2002/3: 253-254). Nothing can be inferred about Call. fr. 392 Pf., which preserves the initial verse of a poem for Arsinoe's wedding. For the incest between Zeus and Hera in Sotades' mock poem (fr. 16 + 1 Powell), see Cameron (1995: 18-20); Lelli (2005: 55); Carney (2013:73-74).

55. On Arsinoe's association with Aphrodite in the protection of seamen and new brides, see Robert (1966); Hauben (1983); Miranda (1989); Malaise (1994); Barbantani (2005; 2008); Bricault (2006: 22-36); Demetriou (2010). For general discussion of the cults of Arsinoe II in Greek and Egyptian sources, see also Quaegebeur (1971; 1971b; 1978; 1989; 1998); Perpillou-Thomas (1993: 155-158); Minas (1998); Dils (1998); Clarysse – Vandorpe (1998); Albersmeier – Minas (1998); Schorn (2001); Thiers (2007); Collombert (2008); Quack (2008); van Oppen (2010); Nilsson (2012); Caneva (2012; 2013b; 2014; 2014b: Chapter 4; 2014c). On the iconography of the goddess *Philadelphos*, cf. Thompson

*posteriori*.<sup>56</sup> Arsinoe II's patronage of the *Adōnia*, which is documented by Theocritus' *Idyll* 15, was most likely meant to strengthen the queen's association with Aphrodite,<sup>57</sup> a goal which the anathematic epigrams for the deified queen at Cape Zephyrion show as accomplished.<sup>58</sup> As Kathryn Gutzwiller argued for Callimachus, *Ep.* 5 Pf. (= 14 GP), concerning the dedication of a shell to Cypris/Arsinoe by the young Selenaiia, the Aphroditic function of Arsinoe as the tutelary goddess of maidens on the threshold of marriage combines with the Ptolemaic association of Arsinoe II and Aphrodite as protectors of navigation. The echo of Aristotle's description of the nautilus, a mollusc navigating in its shell as in a boat, hints at the successful erotic metaphor of the lover as a sailor,<sup>59</sup> while the reference to the halcyon's egg, which used to be hatched in the living shell, suggests the image of a serene, requited, and fertile love.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, Callimachus not only points to the double meaning of Arsinoe's cult at Cape Zephyrion – for sailors and for maidens –<sup>61</sup> but he also manages to project

(1973: 57-59); Kyrieleis (1975: 78-94, 140-148, 154-155); Weber (1993: 254-263); Parente (2002); Müller (2009: 365-379). On the association between Hellenistic queens and Aphrodite in general, see Pomeroy (1984: 30-38); Carney (2000b: esp. 34-39); Caneva (2013).

56. For an overview of the debate on the categories of association/assimilation/symbiosis between humans and gods, see Fraser (1972: I 197); Gutzwiller (1992: 363-365, esp. n. 20); Weber (1993: 253-254); Carney (2000b: 39). For the second couple using ideological motifs invented during their own reign for a retrospective characterization of their predecessors, see also Hauben (2011: 374); Caneva (2014b: Chapter 4). A link between Berenice and Aphrodite could be detected in Callixeinus's report of the Grand Procession, if we accept Kaibel's emendation *μυρτινός* for Berenice's crown (hinting at an Aphrodite-related plant) instead of the transmitted *μυστικός* (Athen. V.202 D); cf. Rice (1983: 120-121). Regardless of its disputed date, however, the procession certainly occurred after the death of Berenice I, thus the passage cannot bring any support to the hypothesis that the queen was associated with Aphrodite in her lifetime.

57. On this point, see Gow (1938); Pomeroy (1984: 30); Burton (1995: 134-144); Reed (2000).

58. For the disputed date of the foundation of Arsinoe's shrine at Cape Zephyrion, see Hauben (1970: 44-46); Bing (2002/3: 257); Caneva (2013b; 2014b: Chapter 4).

59. Evidence of this metaphore is collected in Gutzwiller (1992b: 199-202).

60. On the epigram, see Gutzwiller (1992b) and Gigante Lanzara (1995). On the trip of the nautilus and its final dedication to the Egyptian seaside as a motif of imperial 'geopoetics', see Selden (1998: 309-313); Stephens (2004: 170-173); Thompson (2005: 280-283). A similar interpretation has been proposed for the *Lithika* section of the Milan Posidippus: cf. Bing (2005). As pointed out by Kuttner (2005), imported *mirabilia* such as jewels and gems contribute to the definition of a female version of *tryphē*. Royal *tryphē* is lavishly exemplified by Ptolemy II's pavillion (Calandra [2011]) and in the Indian/Nubian section of his Grand Procession: Athen. V.200D-201C. On the latter point, see Rice (1983: 82-99); Caneva (2014b; Chapter 3).

61. This is explicitly stressed by one of the epigrams commemorating the dedication of the shrine in Cape Zephyrion (Posidippus, AB 116.7-10 = *P. Didot* = 12 GP), whereas AB 39 and 119 (= Athen. VII 318D = 13 GP) only refer to sailors. On these poems, see Bingen (2002; 2002b); Gigante Lanzara (2003); Stephens (2004); Barbantani (2005);

it onto a depiction of marital love coherent with the contemporary representation of the royal couple. The court was a source of fashionable lifestyles and values for the upper classes: the idealized love displayed by royal propaganda seems to have had a strong appeal on members of the elite, as Selenaiia, who dedicated the nautilus, appears to have been.<sup>62</sup> Because court poetry depicted the deified Arsinoe as the embodiment of values highly representative of the royal house, it could provide strong support for consensus by shaping a Ptolemaic model for all those who wanted to show proximity and compliance with the court and its lifestyle.<sup>63</sup>

Arsinoe II's association with Aphrodite is also documented, although in a more subtle way, by the queen's association with Helen. This link is explicitly stated by Theocritus' *Idyll* 15 and suggested by Callimachus through the role of the Dioscuri in his poem on the apotheosis of the queen.<sup>64</sup> In Callimachus' poem, Arsinoe II's ascent to heaven is modelled on the apotheosis of Helen, which is prophesied by the Dioscuri in Euripides' *Helen*.<sup>65</sup> The Helen of the Ptolemies drew on a revised tradition, known from archaic literature onwards, where the wife of Menelaus was discharged of any culpability and depicted as an irreproachable bride.<sup>66</sup>

2008); Demetriou (2010); Caneva (2014c). An anonymous hymn on papyrus (*P. Lit. Goodsp.* 2, I-IV = Powell, 82-89) could also refer to the same event; *contra*, cf. Barbantani (2005). Insights into Arsinoe's cult at Cape Zephyrion are also provided by other anathematic epigrams by Posidippus (AB 36-38) and Hedyllus (4 GP = Ath. XI 497D-E). On Callicrates (*Pros. Ptol.* VI 14607), Ptolemaic admiral and first documented priest of the *Theoi Adelphoi* in Alexandria, see Hauben (1970: esp. 42-46, 66-67; 2013); Clarysse – Van der Veken (1983: 4); Bing (2002/2003); Bingen (2002; 2002b).

62. On Selenaiia as a young member of the Ptolemaic elite, see Robert (1960: 154, n. 4); Fraser (1972: I 587).

63. The same can be said for Hegeso's dedication in Posidippus, AB 36. It is disputed whether the iconography of Arsinoe in Hegeso's dream must be interpreted as referring to Aphrodite (Bing [2002/2003]) or Athena (Stephens [2004]). The first hypothesis seems more convincing. On the epigram, see also Stephens (2005); Ambühl (2007: 282-283).

64. On Theoc. 15.110, Ἐλένην εἰκνῖα, and Arsinoe's association with Helen, see Griffiths (1979: 86-91); Basta Donzelli (1984); Gutzwiller (1992: 367); Weber (1993: 346); Lelli (2005: 38-40); Barbantani (2008: 127). On Callimachus' *Ektheōsis Arsinoēs* (*Ep.* 16 = fr. 228 Pf. + *Dieg.* X.10-13), see Di Benedetto (1994); Hunter (2003: 50-52); Lelli (2005: 46-71, 151-195); Prioux (2011). The Dioscuri are mentioned in the *Diēgēsis* and alluded to at l. 46 (ὦ δαίμοσιν ἀρπάγματα) of the preserved text.

65. Eur. *Hel.* 1666 ff.; on Helen's apotheosis and protection of the sailors together with the Dioscuri, see also Eur. *Or.* 1494 ff., 1631 ff., 1683 ff.; *El.* 1347 ff. The role of the Dioscuri in the queen's ascension is a central point in the spread of Arsinoe's cult. On the couples of conical caps (*pilei*) or stars on the coins of Arsinoe *Philadelphos*, cf. Müller (2009: 365-379).

66. On this redeemed Helen in archaic and classical literature, see the references collected by Basta Donzelli (1984: 308-310). On the association of Helen and the Dioscuri



It could hardly be of secondary importance for the Ptolemies that this morally rehabilitated Helen was linked to Egypt. In Theocritus' *Idyll* 18, the wedding between Helen and Menelaus was narrated according to the successful image of requited love promoted by the Alexandrian court: as for the contemporary ruling pairs, reciprocal love became a central value and a guarantee of the wealth and continuity of the house.<sup>67</sup> But where did the association between Arsinoe II and the Tyndarids come from? A likely hypothesis is that it originated before Arsinoe's arrival in Egypt, perhaps during the period that the queen spent in Samothrace, after leaving Macedon to escape Ptolemy Ceraunus.<sup>68</sup> It has also been argued that Arsinoe's association with the Dioscuri might have been supported by the queen herself as a part of the diplomatic relations between Egypt and Sparta, where the link between the cult of Helen and marriage was particularly strong.<sup>69</sup> These relations finally led to the alliance of the Chremonidean War, for which an active role of Arsinoe II has often been suggested. This assumption about the political role of Arsinoe II remains, however, highly speculative and the opposite hypothesis cannot be ruled out: the association of Arsinoe II with Helen and Sparta may have been made stronger during the decade after the queen's death, when the memory of Arsinoe II was exploited to support Ptolemy II's propaganda during the war against Antigonos II Gonatas.<sup>70</sup>

in Alexandrian poetry, see also Callimachus' *Iambus* 15, fr. 227 Pf., 1-2 + *Dieg.* X.6-8 (Lelli 2005: 33-46, 130-151).

67. See esp. ll. 49-55 stressing reciprocity (marked by the anaphore of ἀλλάλαον) and linking it to the continuity of the house (ἐξ εὐπατριδῶν εἰς εὐπατρίδας).

68. Arsinoe found refuge on the island in 280/279, after that her half-brother Ceraunus had killed two of her sons (cf. Carney [2013: 49-64]). In Hellenistic Samothrace, the Dioscuri underwent a progressive identification with the local Great Gods, mainly on the ground of their common role as protectors of sailors (for this function of the Dioscuri, see also Theoc. 22.6-24). On Arsinoe II as the promoter of the cult of the Dioscuri in Alexandria, see Fraser (1972: I 207); Lelli (2005: 38-40); on the spread of their cult in Egypt, Quaegebeur (1983: 312-316).

69. In Sparta, Helen was worshipped both as a maiden and as a bride in association with Menelaus: see Calame (1977: 281-285, 333-350); Pirenne-Delforge (1994: 193-216). The second aspect provided a suitable basis for her Ptolemaic characterization.

70. The decree of Chremonides (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 687 = *SIG*<sup>3</sup> 434/5; 268/7 BC) mentions Arsinoe between the forerunners of Ptolemy's foreign policy. Further link between the queen and Sparta is suggested by Arsinoe's epiclesis *Chalkioikos* (in a street name in Alexandria: cf. *SB* 10251; 252/1 BC). I discuss both details and their historical implications in Caneva (2013b). Moreover, Arsinoe and Helen had demes named after them in Alexandria and Helen was eponymous of an island in Egypt, near Canopus (Call. *SH* 254.5; Eustath., *ad Dion. Per.* 13; Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἑλένηιον = *Hekataios FG* 1 F 309; cf. Visser [1938: 19-20]; Fraser [1972: I 45, II 122, n. 55]).

In the *Ektheōsis Arsinoēs* Callimachus develops a narrative pattern that he also applies to the *Lock of Berenice*.<sup>71</sup> The first aspect worth mentioning is that in both cases Callimachus focuses on the co-protagonists of the event, i.e. those who support the connection between the queen and Aphrodite: the Dioscuri accompanying Arsinoe II to heaven in the *Ektheōsis*; Zephyrus, “the horse of Arsinoe” (l. 54), delivering Berenice II’s lock to Aphrodite, in the *Coma* (ll. 63-64). Second, in both poems Callimachus converts mourning into the foundation of a new cult.<sup>72</sup> It has been argued that the role of the queen’s sister Philotera in the *Ektheōsis* recalls Demeter’s in the *Homeric Hymn* 2, while a structural parallel equates the sighting of the funeral pyres in Egypt to the episode of Andromache discovering Hector’s death in *Iliad* 22.<sup>73</sup> By combining these archaic hypotexts, Callimachus overlaps human and divine mourning for the death of Arsinoe. According to the *Diēgēsis* of the poem, moreover, the dedication of an altar and a precinct to Arsinoe in Alexandria marked the end of the poem, thus paralleling the establishment of a temple and altar for Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn*.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, in the poem for Berenice II, the lock mourns for the loss of its sisters (l. 51, ἄρτι [ν]εότμητόν με κόμαι ποθέεσκον ἄδε[λφραί]),<sup>75</sup> but the final acceptance of its new celestial position precludes the establishment of the cult: before being cut, the lock used to drink the unscented oils used by the virgin Berenice (ll. 77-78),<sup>76</sup> without enjoying women’s perfumes,

71. On the *Coma Berenices* (fr. 110 Pf. = *PSI* 1092 + *P. Oxy.* 2258C; Cat. 66; now fr. 213 Massimilla), see Marinone (1984); Gutzwiller (1992); Weber (1993: 264-269); Koenen (1993: 89-113); Selden (1998: 326-354); Llewellyn-Jones – Winder (2011); Prioux (2011); Hauben (2011); Harder (2012: II, 793-855), with updated discussion of the date of the narrated events. On Greek hair-cutting rituals associated with *parthenoi*, cf. Nachtergaele (1980); Marinone (1984: 18-19); Gutzwiller (1992: 369-373); Perpillou-Thomas (1993: 14-15); Hauben (2011: 363). Gutzwiller points at Berenice’s post-marriage votive cut as “a calculated deviation from the norm ... to make it concern not the dangers of transitions to married life, but the joys and fears of a loving couple already yoked by marriage”. On the Egyptian background of Isis/Hathor’s lock (cf. Plut. *De Is.* 14.356d), see Nachtergaele (1981); Schwentzel (2000).

72. Remarkably, this narrative pattern is paralleled by non-literary sources: cf. the Canopus decree (*OGIS* 56), where mourning for the premature death of the little princess Berenice precludes the institution of her posthumous cults. On this point, see most recently Hauben (2011: 364).

73. For the reference to Enna and Deo, see Lelli (2005: 180-182). On the Iliadic parallel, Di Benedetto (1994); D’Alessio (1997: 665); Lelli (2005: 176).

74. *H.H.* II, 270-272, 296-298.

75. On the male gender of the *πλόκαμος* and the allusion to Berenice II’s temporary separation from her brother and husband, see Koenen (1993: 94-95), *contra* Gutzwiller (1992: 374-378), who pointed at the model of traditional female laments for lost companions.

76. For the distinction between *λιτά* (unscented oils used by maidens) and *μύρα* (perfumes for women), see Gutzwiller (1992: 381); Koenen (1993: 95, n. 164).

whereas after its catasterism it will be offered scented oils by new brides before the consummation of their marriage.<sup>77</sup> The case of the celestial lock offers an insight into how different branches of the court cooperated to invent a new aspect of royal ideology.<sup>78</sup> The offering of the lock in Arsinoe's temple at Cape Zephyrion, its disappearance and the pseudo-scientific interpretation of the event, eventually allow the living queen to be included among the Aphrodite-related royal women. Meanwhile the adaptation of the hair-cutting ritual performed by maidens portrays Berenice II as the exemplary devoted bride concerned for her husband's fate: a model which is consequently celebrated by the whole society through a new cult.<sup>79</sup>

As Elizabeth Carney has argued, the power of female charm over dynasts was a central feature in the association of both queens and royal courtesans with Aphrodite.<sup>80</sup> Since the end of the fourth century, cultic honours provided a religious field for the display of the prestige of courtly women, and Aphrodite was the favourite goddess in this process, in Ptolemaic Egypt as well as in the rest of the Hellenistic world. Cults for women fulfilled the same aim as those for men by contributing to a representation of female power paralleling and integrating that of male dynasts. This approach may also help us clarify the asymmetry between Berenice I and Ptolemy I in Theocritus' *Encomium*. Unlike her husband, the queen still lacks divine status, but the special disposition of Aphrodite towards the Ptolemaic queen – the first to receive cultic honours – seems to be meant to fill this gap. Indeed, by sharing her charm with Berenice I, Aphrodite starts the process which, passing through requited love and the benefits that it brings about, finally leads to the granting of cultic status to the queen. Intense, requited love within marriage also has a dynastic relevance: it distinguishes the status of the queen among other charming

77. Cat. 66.79-88; the *aition* is absent in *P. Oxy.* 2258. Gutzwiller (1992: 381-382) suggested that the papyrus transmits the first version of the *Coma*, before the establishment of the cult and the final organization of the *Aitia*. An addition by Catullus would be hardly explicable. On the place of the *Coma* within the general structure of *Aitia*, cf. Lelli (2005: 64-66); Harder (2010: 93, 97; 2012: II, 799-800); Massimilla (2010: 464-465).

78. Cf. Hauben (2011: 361-363).

79. The cult eventually obliterates the votive character of Berenice II's dedication to drive it back to the more general model of rites of passage, thus ensuring its largest diffusion.

80. Carney (2000b: esp. 30-34) collects evidence of cults of royal courtesans in association with Aphrodite. As Ogden (1999: *Part II*) argues, a prosopographic survey invalidates attempts to define a distinctive social status for queens, royal wives, concubines, and courtesans because courtly women often passed from one status to another, sometimes more than once in their career.

courtly women,<sup>81</sup> consequently ensuring legitimacy to her children. Thus poetic fiction provides a suitable application of the logic that underlies the introduction of female ruler cults, both with Berenice I and in later cases. The focus on mediators and co-protagonists may also be interpreted in this perspective: as the list of deified queens and cultic associations grows longer, court poetry uses Aphrodite-related figures to justify further equations to the goddess and, following contemporary developments in ruler cult, to support the access of living queens to divine status.<sup>82</sup>

### 5. Laodice in epigraphy

Several Hellenistic texts justify the dedication of godlike honours to both living and dead dynasts by appealing to their commitment to the freedom and wealth of cities and subjects. However, whereas the king's zeal is mainly expressed in a properly political, military or financial field, the logic of distinguishing and integrating male and female power implies that a specific domain must be available for women as well.<sup>83</sup>

The fixity of the euergetic discourse creates a consistent frame, within which diplomatic transactions between rulers and subjects are portrayed as the ordinary function of a long-lasting reciprocity based on shared moral values.<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, honorific decrees and royal letters follow a stock structure, depicting friendly international relations in terms of a mutual exchange of benefiting and rewarding acts between rulers and local communities.<sup>85</sup> Within this frame, legislative acts express the reasons

81. Theoc. 17. 308-39: τῷ οὐπω τινὰ φαντὶ ἀδεῖν τόσον ἀνδρὶ γυναῖκα, ὅσον περ Πτολεμαῖος ἔην ἐφίλησεν ἄκοιτιν; “Thus they say that no woman has ever yet so pleased her husband as Ptolemy loved his wife”, trans. Hunter (2003: 81).

82. Cf. Hauben (2011: 362): “étant donné que le catastérisme impliqua une sorte de déification et porta en soi l'annonce d'une complète divinisation future, la reine se vit d'emblée élevée à un niveau surhumain”.

83. Cf. Caneva (2012; 2013).

84. See Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 182-194).

85. On the interaction between civic decrees and royal letters, see Virgilio (2011: 22-55). On honorific decrees, see also Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 183-187); McLean (2002: 228-245, esp. 229-232) for their standard structure, which can be summarised as follows: 1) the opening, with date, occasion and promoters; 2) the motives, introduced by a causal conjunction (such as ἐπειδὴ), explaining the reasons that gave rise to the honours, with a list of the benefits of the honorand, the proofs of his εὐεργεσία, φιλανθρωπία, εὐνοία towards the community; 3) the hortatory intention, reminding future benefactors of the grateful attitude of the city; 4) the resolution, usually introduced by the formula ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ and the deliberative verb δεδόχθαι or ἔδοξε(ν), including the statement of the honours awarded; 5) the conclusion, comprehending the provisions meant to the fulfillment of the decreed honours and a curse against anyone that could try to alter them. On the other

for cultic honours through a direct link between causes (benefits and good diplomatic relationships) and effects (the decreed honours). This implies that while trying to combine literary evidence with epigraphic sources concerning the ideological motivation of ruler cults, we must be aware that they follow different strategies to build authority.

Cultic honours for Queen Laodice, wife of Antiochos III, provide a significant epigraphic parallel to the ideological justification of female cults in Alexandrian poetry.<sup>86</sup> I start by discussing the dossier on the *asylia* granted to Teos by Antiochos III, dating around 200.<sup>87</sup> Having accorded to the city the status of “sacred and inviolate and free from tribute”, Antiochos received cultic honours from the Teians as their benefactor and saviour.<sup>88</sup> By recognizing that Queen Laodice shared her brother-husband’s zeal in euergetism towards the city,<sup>89</sup> the same decree accorded cultic honours to both of them, implying the dedication of *agal-mata* of the king and queen beside the statue of Dionysus so that they would “share in the temple and other rituals of Dionysus and be the common saviours (κοιν[οὶ σωτῆρε]ς) of the city and together (κοινῆι) bestow favours on us”.<sup>90</sup> The second decree, dating a little later, inscribed the memory of the euergetic ruling couple deep into the political and religious calendar of the city: a new festival was founded, the *Antiocheia kai Laodikeia*, which should be held at the beginning of the year, when new officials entered their office and ephebes were introduced to public life. In addition to these common honours, measures were taken to distinguish the specific areas where the king and queen had provided their protection. On the one hand, an *agalma* of Antiochos was to be placed at

hand, royal letters usually consist of 1) an introductory section acknowledging an embassy from a city; 2) the acceptance of honours decreed by the city; 3) the central section exposing the king’s new benefactions and personal motivations; 4) a contract clause where the king promises more benefactions if the city proves loyal to him in the future (see Welles in *RC*, xli-1; Ma [2002<sup>2</sup>: 182-185]).

86. On Laodice’s status and the relations between her local and dynastic cults, see Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>); Chaniotis (2007).

87. The dossier includes two decrees voted by the Teians within a short interval (*SEG* XLI 1003 I/II) and four royal letters concerning the acceptance of the honours (*SEG* XLI 1003 III/IV, 1004-1005). The two decrees attest the institution, augmentation, and explanation of the cults for the ruling couple. The date of the documents is disputed, ranging from 203 to 197 BC: see discussion in Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 260-265). On the cultic honours in Teos, see Herrmann (1965: 34-40); for notes on the text, J. and L. Robert, *Bull. Épig.* 1969, nrr. 495-499; 1974, nr. 481; 1977, nr. 405; 1984, nr. 365; see also Rigsby (1996: 280-292); Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 308-321); Virgilio (2003: 41-43); Chaniotis (2007); Wiemer (2009); Caneva (2012; 2013).

88. *SEG* XLI 1003 I.18-19, 21-22.

89. *SEG* XLI 1003 I.36-40.

90. *SEG* XLI 1003 I. 43-46, 50-51. Trans. adapted from Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 311).

the *bouleuterion*, where the king had conferred the city its new status and where new officials should sacrifice to the king, the *Charites*, and *Mneme* on New Year's Day.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, because of her piety to the gods, Laodice was granted a place in the ritual life of the city:<sup>92</sup> a fountain named after the queen was to be built in the *agora* and water should be drawn from it for all the civic sacrifices as well as for the ablutions of the brides.<sup>93</sup>

The queen's piety as a concurrent motivation for cultic honours is also attested in Antiochos' letter *OGIS* 224,<sup>94</sup> where the king explains the reasons for the dedication of a cult to his sister-wife Laodice:

[Βασιλε]ῦς Ἀντίοχος Ἀναξίμβροτοι χαίρειν ·  
 [βουλόμε]νοι τῆς ἀδελφῆς βασιλίσσης Λαοδίκη[ς]  
 [τὰ]ς τιμὰς ἐπὶ πλεῖον αὔξειν καὶ τοῦτο ἀναγ-  
 [καίό]τατον ἑαυτοῖς νομίζοντες εἶναι διὰ τὸ  
 [μὴ μ]όνον ἡμῖν φιλοστόργως καὶ κηδεμονι-  
 [κῶς] αὐτὴν συμβιοῦν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸ θε[ῖ]-  
 [ον ε]ὔσεβῶς δια[κ]εῖσθαι, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα μὲν  
 [ὅσα πρ]έπει καὶ δίκαιόν ἐστι παρ' ἡμῶν αὐτῆ  
 [συνα]ντᾶσθαι δια[τ]ελοῦμεν μετὰ φιλοσ-  
 [τ]ο[ρ]γίας ποιοῦντε[ς, κρ]ίνομεν δὲ καθάπερ  
 [ἡμ]ῶν [ἀπο]δείκ[ν]υν[ται κ]ατὰ τὴν βασιλεί-  
 [αν ἀ]ρχ[ι]ερεῖς, καὶ ταύτης καθίστασθαι  
 [ἐ]ν τοῖς αὐτοῖς τόποις ἀρχιερείας αἱ φο-  
 [ρῆ]σουσιν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς ἔχοντας  
 [εἰκόνας αὐ]τῆς, ἐπιγραφῆσονται δὲ καὶ ἐν  
 [τοῖς] συναλλάγμασι μετὰ τοὺς τῶν  
 [προγόν]ων καὶ ἡμῶν ἀρχιερεῖς<sup>95</sup>

The clause [ὅσα πρ]έπει καὶ δίκαιόν ἐστι παρ' ἡμῶν (l. 8) parallels similar formulas with verbs προσήκειν and καθήκειν that in civic

91. *SEG* XLI 1003 II. 33-34.

92. A double causal sentence links cultic honours to the queen's attitude, pious towards the gods (l. 72, εὔσεβῶς) and grateful with mankind (l. 73, εὐχαριστῶς). On the queen's piety as a motivation for cults, see below, *OGIS* 224, as well as l. 13 of the Mendes stele (*Urk.* II 41); cf. Thiers (2007: 190).

93. *SEG* XLI 1003 II.70-82.

94. The document (*OGIS* 224 = *RC* 36/37; cf. Robert [1949; 1967]) includes two letters, the first of which introduces the king's appointment of a priestess of the queen.

95. *OGIS* 224.12-28: "King Antiochos to Anaximbrotos, greetings. Wishing to increase the honours of our sister, Queen Laodike, and thinking that this was a most necessary task for us, since she not only is a loving and caring consort, but also is piously disposed towards the divine, we continuously do, with love, the things which is fitting and just that she should receive from us, and we decree that, just as high-priests of us are appointed throughout the kingdom, so there should be established, in the same places, high-priestesses of her also, who will wear golden crowns bearing her image, and be inscribed in the contracts after the high-priests of our ancestors and of us", trans. Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 355).

decrees and royal letters are meant to praise the fulfillment of moral duties.<sup>96</sup> In this case, however, the same logic is applied to the queen's affectionate and solicitous attitude towards her husband (ll. 5-6, φιλοστόργως καὶ κηδεμονι[κῶς] ... συμβιοῦν) as well as to a more general evaluation of her pious behaviour. This confirms the flexibility of the motif of reciprocal love for both the legitimization of the ruling couple and the establishment of female divine honours. Overall, the same topic can be adapted to different discursive domains by fitting it to the logic and pragmatics of diverse media and genres.

While Antiochos' letter portrays the queen as a loving wife, whose cultic honours depend on her marital devotion, two royal letters sent by Laodice herself to the citizens of Sardis and Iasos explore another aspect of the queen's role: her diplomatic commitment for the sake of her subjects and in compliance with her husband's policies. In the first text, where Laodice replies to the announcement of cultic honours accorded by the city of Sardis,<sup>97</sup> she adopts the formulas of royal letters:

... τὰς τε δὴ τιμὰς ἀποδει[δ]έγμεθα ἡδέως καὶ τὴν τοῦ δήμου προθυμίαν ἐπαινοῦμεν [καὶ πειρασόμεθα] ἀεὶ τι ἀγαθὸν συνκατασκευάζειν τῆι πόλ[λει] ...<sup>98</sup>

In the later letter to Iasos, Laodice stresses her complete cooperation with her husband's policies:

ll. 4-6, 11-15: ἀκούουσα πλεονάκις τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ ἦν | τε ἀντίληψιν τῶν ἑαυτοῦ φίλων καὶ συμμάχων | διατελεῖ ποιούμενος [...],<sup>99</sup> προαιρουμένη δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ ἀκόλουθα πράσειν τῆι σπουδῆι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκτενεῖται καὶ διὰ | τοῦτο καταθέσθαι τινὰ εὐεργεσίᾳ μὲν εἰς τοὺς | ἀσθενούντας τῶν πολιτῶν, εὐχρηστίαν δὲ κοινὴν τῶι σύμπαντι δήμῳ

ll. 25-32: γινομένοις θ' ὑμῖν εἷς τε τὸν | ἀδελφὸν καὶ καθόλου τὸν οἶκον ἡμῶν οἴους καθήκει | [κα]ὶ τῶν ἀπαντω[μ]ένων εὐεργεσιῶν

96. See Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 188-190).

97. SEG XXXIX 1284 to Sardis, dated June 213 BC = Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>), nr. 2 B. Cultic honours include a *Laodikeion* and a *bōmos* as well as a *panēgyris* entitled *Laodikeia*, to be held every year on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Hyperberetaios; in addition, Laodice accepts the Sardians' resolution "to carry out a procession and a sacrifice to Zeus Genethlios for the safety of our brother, king Antiochos, of us, and of our children" (ll. 10-15; trans. Ma [2002<sup>2</sup>: 287]). The stress on the queen's commitment for the family group provides a parallel to the φιλοστόργως καὶ κηδεμονι[κῶς] in Antiochos' letter.

98. SEG XXXIX 1284.16-19: "we accept all the honours with pleasure, and we praise the eagerness of the people and we will always try to produce some favour to the city", trans. Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 287). On the importance of ἀεὶ in projecting euergetism and reciprocity to the future, see Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 187). On the topic of repaying benefits, Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 183).

99. I omit the section concerning Antiochos' benefactions to the city: the restitution of freedom and autonomous laws and the improvement of the wealth of the city, for which see ll. 6-11.

μεμνημένοις | [εὐ]χαρίστως πειράσομαι καὶ ἄλλα ἃ ἂν ἐπινοῶ  
 συν[κατ]ασκευάζειν, παντὶ τρόπῳ συνεκτρέχειν προ[αιρου]μένη τῆι  
 τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ θελήσει· κατανοῶ γὰρ ἀδ[τὸν λ]ίαν ἐκτενωῶς ἔχοντα  
 πρὸς τὴν ἐνανόρθωσιν τῆς πόλεως.<sup>100</sup>

Laodice's decision is introduced by a long hypotactic sentence explaining the motivations of her intervention in moral terms and stressing her coherence with her brother-husband's euergetic attitude towards the city.<sup>101</sup> Again, a traditional motif of royal letters and civic decrees – the consistency of a new king's policy with his predecessors' and the continuity of the royal help to the city –<sup>102</sup> is applied to the interactions within the ruling couple. As a consequence, the diplomatic effects of the king's euergetism are doubled by the depiction of the queen as acting in harmonious support of her brother-husband. On the other hand, the duplication of the euergetic function does not imply any overlap: whereas Antiochos' help deals with the city laws and constitution, Laodice's commitment unfolds through a ten-year wheat donation, whose profits for the city shall be used to provide the daughters of poor citizens with dowries.<sup>103</sup> This measure is followed by the Iasian decree introducing cultic honours for the queen, which, as in the case of Teos, are specifically related to her commitment as a promoter of marriage: annually a maiden will be appointed priestess of Queen Aphrodite Laodice (ll. 79-82) and a festival will take place during the month Aphrodision, on the day of Laodice's birth, when men and women on the threshold of marriage shall sacrifice to Queen Aphrodite Laodice (ll. 82-86).<sup>104</sup>

100. *I. Iasos* 4 to Iasos, dated ca. 196 = Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>), nr. 26 A. ll. 4-6, 11-15: "Having often heard from my brother what urgent help he continually deploys for his friends and allies [...], and making it my own intention to act in accordance with his zeal and eagerness, and, because of this, to confer some benefactions on the poor among the citizens, and a general advantage to the whole people"; ll. 25-32: "If you remain as it is right in your behaviour towards my brother and generally towards our house, and if you gratefully remember the benefactions which you have met with, I shall try to procure for you the other favours which I can think up, since I make it my intention in all matters to concur with the will of my brother; for I notice that he is extremely eagerly disposed towards the reconstruction of the city"; trans. Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 329-331).

101. The conclusion reasserts the same theme by recalling Laodice's personal commitment (l. 6, 29-30, προαιρουμένη) to her brother's interests and by redoubling the causal link between her action and her knowledge of Antiochos's commitment towards Iasos (l. 32, γὰρ; l. 4, ἀκούουσα; l. 31, κατανοῶ); cf. Ma (2002<sup>2</sup>: 196-197).

102. Parallel cases are provided e.g. by the Nikouria decree (*SIG*<sup>3</sup> 390) and by Ptolemy II's letter to Miletos (*RC* 14).

103. *I. Iasos* 4.15-25. The amount of the dowries is fixed to 300 Antiocheian drachmai, so that every woman getting married will be given the same part of Laodice's gift.

104. The following section is fragmentary but some excerpts from its first lines would add more details to the cultic honours.



## 6. Conclusions: Requited love in context

Berenice I bore her son, the future Philadelphus, on Cos, where the court resided during Ptolemy's campaign in Asia Minor (309-308). This happened approximately at the same time when her husband tried to marry Alexander's sister Cleopatra to support his pursuit of the Macedonian throne.<sup>105</sup> The project failed, but both his wives, Eurydice and Berenice, would hardly have conserved their prestige if Ptolemy had managed to get Cleopatra's hand. Similarly, some years after the cults for Laodice had been established, Antiochos married a young woman from Chalcis.<sup>106</sup> These cases remind us that, whatever its poetic and epigraphic depiction may be, and in spite of the fashionable effects which this representation may have on members of the elite, courtly love was a matter of politics, and its fervency could dissipate as quickly as it had arisen.

According to the Argead tradition, royal women did not need any specific title or appointment in order to play a role in politics. Their influence became stronger with Olympias and the later women of the Macedonian house, who proved able to play an influential role during the struggles of the Successors. Personalization of politics was a common trend in the Hellenistic period; it enabled monarchic power to be represented as if it was founded on widely acknowledged values of reciprocity and moral commitment between the rulers and their subjects. If this was true for kings, such a representation could work even better for queens, whose formal political status was less precise than for male sovereigns. Since the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the appearance of female royal titles parallels a general trend towards the consolidation of new dynasties. However, this seems to mark a step in the formalization of court protocol rather than a significant upgrade in the representation of the queen's role within the royal couple.<sup>107</sup> Despite the active role in contemporary politics that some of them actually had, third-century queens were still mostly portrayed, in poetry even more than in inscriptions, as acting in the field of personal diplomatic commitment and mediation between the king and his subjects, and/or as the embodied source of the legitimation and continuity of the royal house.

105. See recently Bosworth (2000); Meeus (2009b).

106. Pol. 20.8. Cf. Ogden (1999: 133-140).

107. A major argument is that, unlike *basileus*, during the early Hellenistic period the title *basilissa* is used without institutional exclusivity, but can refer to all female members of the royal house: for a review of this detail, cf. Caneva (2013).

Finally, the rhetoric of reciprocal love is associated with a model of royal couple where competences are distinguished on a gender basis just to be strategically integrated for a common aim. From this perspective, the chronological limits of the discussed texts mark something more than a merely conventional time range. When considered against its historical background, this definition of courtly love hints at a period when the new dynasties looked for legitimation and when cultural models for both male and female monarchic power still had to be defined. Overall, requited love marks a point in the evolution of the role of royal women within the court. It is then not surprising that this ideological motif developed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, when the struggles between the Diadochi had reached a provisional compromise, resulting into the foundation and establishment and consolidation of new royal houses by the end of the century. By that time, court hierarchies were more clearly formalized and the search for dynastic stability gave queens, especially in Egypt, an increasingly more powerful role in their relationship with kings, both within the ruling couple and in cases of coregency with infant sovereigns<sup>108</sup>.

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108. In this regard, Carney (2000: 180-181) stresses the difference between the dynastic instability of the Ptolemies and Seleucids and the creation of a more stable male power in Antigonid Macedon, ultimately preventing royal women from acting as protagonists in the court life.

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