A SMALL and very attractive female head was acquired in 1977 by the Art Gallery of Vassar College¹ (Pls. 73, 74:a). It is made of a translucent alabaster-like marble; traces of the original paint are still visible on some of the features; white, yellow, and dark gray accretions from long burial are scattered over much of the upper portions of the head and face.² The whole front of the head and face are intact and are well preserved. The undersurface and the right edge of the neck are smooth and unbroken. The rear parts of the head, however, are sliced away from just behind the crown all the way down to the base of the neck (Pl. 73:d). In addition a large rectangular cutting containing two drill marks penetrates deeply into the left half of the back, and there is a narrow rectangular channel for a dowel sunk into the long neck. The modern mounting rod goes up through this and is anchored into the center of the head (Pl. 73:c, d).

The woman’s coiffure is most distinctive, indeed, among surviving marble heads apparently unique. Her face is surrounded by two large coiled locks with horizontal striations. They are neatly rolled and slightly flat. Each one starts just above the lobe of the ear, and they meet at the center of the forehead. Behind these sausage-like rolls there is a slight depression. Over the top of the head the hair is centrally parted; it is unevenly and roughly

¹ Purchased in New York on the open market in 1977. Vassar College Art Gallery acc. no. 77.22. Height: 11.9 cm.

² There are substantial traces of red on the hair, mouth, eyelids, and left eyebrow; black remains in eyes and hair crevices. Blue particles in the eyes proved to be Egyptian blue. They were microscopically examined by C. Craine and R. Newman of the Department of Conservation, Fogg Museum of Art, Cambridge, Mass. I am much indebted to both of them. The accretions were also examined, and they are above the pigment layer.

In this article “right” and “left” are those of the spectator.
worked, and it streams down irregularly to the sides. Only the lower parts of the ears have been modeled; immediately above them the surface is quite smooth. This is especially the case above the left ear (Pl. 73:b); higher still on the same side are four marks made by a pointed chisel. Located on the central part at the top of the head there is a hole into which some symbolic attribute was originally inserted (Pl. 74:a).

The provenance of the head is unrecorded. Its style and technique, however, point to a place of origin in the Egyptian Delta and probably to Alexandria itself. The regal bearing of the head and the individuality of the features lead me to conclude that it is a portrait of a Ptolemaic queen of the Hellenistic period. The locks framing her face suggest that the queen wishes to be associated with the goddess Isis.

The woman represented is self-possessed and calm, and there is a certain aristocratic elegance to her features. Characteristic of the head as a whole is its simplified shape and the compact unity of the face and hair. Notable also are the broad rectangular forehead and the widely spaced, large but shallow eyes with clearly outlined lids. The long straight nose concludes in rather wide nostrils. Most remarkable is the small mouth which is tucked up closely under the nose; the lips are closed and soft as well as richly curved yet they also seem pursed. There is nothing harsh about the modeling of the face; the eyebrows are not sharply delineated; they are indicated by a gentle change of direction in the planes, and while they form a low arch over the eye they do not repeat the stronger curve of the upper lid. The crowding of the nose and mouth seems unnecessary in view of the breadth of the face as a whole and the long ample chin which slopes steeply into the neck. The neck itself, full and long, is subdivided into three horizontal sections by “Venus rings”, although there are no lines as such. Also characteristic of the head are the undisturbed surfaces of forehead, cheeks, jaws, and chin so that a sense of plumpness and fleshiness, yet also bonelessness, is imparted. The impression that the sitter has a regal, even haughty, nature is derived from the way the head is situated frontally and on axis with the neck. A note of formality is also achieved because the features are framed by the rigidly symmetrical arrangement of the two rolls of hair. The alabaster-like quality of the marble is partly responsible for the extreme beauty of the face itself. Indeed there is a contrast between the smoothly modeled facial features as opposed to the roughly finished, bold ringlets with their coarse, irregular striations. In short, face and hair produce a quite different textural effect. In general this contrast is characteristic of Ptolemaic marble work.

If we first consider where to place the head chronologically within the stylistic development of Hellenistic sculpture it would seem to belong in the later phases, that is after the middle of the 2nd century B.C. The regularity and idealized form of the face in which physical beauty is more important than specificity might be viewed as characteristic of the 3rd century in general, although there are contemporary realistic portraits. But the absence of any Praxitelean sfumato and our inability to sense any bone structure as distinct from

---

3 See below, footnote 18.

4 See Kyrieleis, pp. 131–135; Günter Grimm and Dieter Johannes, Kunst der Ptolemäer- und Römerzeit im Ägyptischen Museum Kairo, Mainz 1975, p. 4.

flesh are inconsistent with what we presently understand of the early Hellenistic style.6 On the other hand the quiet surfaces, the marked symmetry of the pose, facial features, and hair arrangement, as well as the linear handling of the eyes, would indicate a turning away from the more pictorial and mobile style associated with the art of Pergamon and the High Hellenistic "baroque".7 There is not a trace of sentimentality, nor even emotion, in the expression; this queen looks out forthrightly; she seems to forgo charm and any kind of seductive appeal to the spectator. For this reason it would seem necessary to relate her to the subdued and classicizing renderings of the later 2nd century and 1st century B.C.8

This dating is consistent with the broad outlines of Ptolemaic portraiture which have been discussed recently by Helmut Kyrieleis. While he is aware that the formal development of the dynastic portraits is generally compatible with that of Hellenistic sculpture as a whole, at the same time he perceives in them, as a group, certain stylizations or "Egyptianizing elements" which set them apart and which constitute a virtual regional portrait style.9 Many of these elements can be seen in the Vassar head: a simplified blocklike facial scheme, features which do not deeply penetrate this scheme and therefore tend to remain isolated. The result is a "remarkably quiet, clear expression." In Ptolemaic portraits plumpness, signifying fertility, was regarded as a desirable quality and is frequently present. The hair is also usually distinctively handled, according to Kyrieleis. While the style of Greek-Hellenistic coiffures may be lively, mobile, and affected by light, Egyptian-Hellenistic coiffures may be static, symmetrical, and abstract.10 These characteristics are, he argues, more prevalent after the later 3rd century.11

In many respects a close parallel to the Vassar head is provided by one which represents the goddess Isis found in 1908 at Thmuis (modern Tell Timai) in the East Delta. It is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Pl. 75:a, b).12 Both works are made of marble and are well under life-size. In the goddess from Thmuis the bridge of the nose is wider, but the tip of the nose itself and the nostrils are heavy and relatively broad as in the Vassar sculpture. More striking is the way in which the narrow, thick-lipped mouth in each case is pushed high under the nose, leaving an unusually short interval above the upper lip but a long expanse of chin below. While it is true that the forehead in the Isis is triangular rather

7 The emotive style of the mid-Hellenistic period is revealed, for example, in the "Beautiful Head" from Pergamon: Havelock, *op. cit.* (footnote 5 above), no. 102.
8 The work of Damophon of Messene and Euboulides of Athens would provide the best parallels. For Athena by Euboulides and Despoina by Damophon see Bieber, *op. cit.* (footnote 6 above), figs. 669, 670.
9 Kyrieleis, pp. 128–136, 158–164. The presence of Egyptian elements in Ptolemaic art, specifically in faïence oinochoai, has also been discussed by D. B. Thompson (*Oinochoai*, pp. 82–83, 104–106). She explains this phenomenon, visually apparent in certain stylizations, by reasoning that local Egyptian craftsmen were employed in Greek faïence factories. Kyrieleis sees the stylizations in portrait sculpture as politically inspired and as symptomatic of Ptolemaic views of dynastic power.
11 Kyrieleis, p. 136. He also argues here that the Egyptian influence on Ptolemaic portraiture increased after 200 B.C. because, like an ancient pharaoh, Ptolemy V Epiphanes chose to be crowned at Memphis.
12 Inv. J.E. 39517; height: 19 cm. See Grimm and Johannes, *op. cit.* (footnote 4 above), pp. 4, 18, no. 10, with earlier bibliography.
than rectangular and the shape of the face itself narrower and more distinctly oval, in both heads, cheeks, jaws, and chin surfaces are passively conceived and indeed without interior structure. The eyes of the Thmuis sculpture are closer together and considerably smaller, more deeply set into the head and less linear. The waves and ringlets of the Isis-style hair are also softer and their striations handled with more variation and movement. G. Grimm and D. Johannes date the Isis about 150 B.C., that is, at the turn from the High to the Late Hellenistic period. This seems a little too early for the Vassar sculpture.

An impressive similarity also exists between the Vassar sculpture and the marble head of a Ptolemaic queen now in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin (Pl. 75:c, d). No one has doubted that the Berlin work is Late Hellenistic in date and an example of the classicizing current of the later 2nd century B.C. Kyrieleis draws attention to its affinity with the sculpture of the Peloponnesian artist Damophon of Messene, and he tentatively identified the queen as Cleopatra II who ruled from 173 B.C. until the death of her second husband in 116 B.C. The Berlin head produces an effect which is cold and lifeless; the forehead and cheeks are even less modulated, and there is an overprecise definition of the eyes and a dull simplicity to the facial shape. I conclude that the Berlin head expresses a classicism which is more stilted and academic and is therefore somewhat later than the Vassar sculpture. We may observe, nevertheless, that the large eyes, their wide spacing and clearly rimmed lids, as well as the small cupid’s-bow mouth, are comparable in the two works.

Yet the most important similarity between the Vassar and Berlin heads lies in the arrangement of the hair. Coiled locks, which so frequently in Hellenistic art connote the goddess Isis (Pl. 75:a, b), are clustered around the composed countenance of the Berlin queen. Moving back from her brows in parallel formation are three ringlets on each side of a central division. These ringlets, derived ultimately perhaps from the segments of the melon coiffure, are thick, rather flat, and cross-marked to indicate separate strands. At the temples, in an abrupt change of direction, two more ringlets fall vertically on either side of the face to about the level of the ear, and two longer ones descend below these. The hallmarks of this coiffure are symmetry and an almost wiglike artificiality which result from the careful marshaling of large twisted locks. Although they are not so abundant in the Vassar head in its present condition, this is also true of the hair rolls around the face. Common to both sculptures also is the contrast between the relative coarseness of the ringlets and the smooth elegance of the features and facial surfaces.

Like many marble Ptolemaic portraits and ideal heads that have been found in Egypt the Vassar head must have been completed in clay. This is the case in spite of its small size. Imported marble was extremely costly, and sculptures even more diminutive than the one

14 Inv. no. 331; height: 36 cm. See Kyrieleis, M13, p. 185, with earlier bibliography.
15 Kyrieleis, pp. 120, 128.
16 On Isis curls, frequently referred to as “libyan locks”, see Thompson, Oinochoai, p. 61. Kyrieleis (p. 185) interprets the arrangement of the hair above the forehead of the Berlin queen as indicating a melon coiffure. I prefer to see it as the more stylized descendant of the curls or libyan locks he illustrates on pl. 104, Louvre MA 3546. See below, footnote 28.
under discussion were sometimes supplemented by a cheaper material. The marble from which the Vassar head was carved seems to have been a discarded fragment; the large rectangular depression at the back, apparently carved out for some architectural purpose, cannot otherwise be explained. All the rear surfaces are roughly tooled to allow the clay to adhere.17

We can be fairly confident that more ringlets were attached behind the rolls surrounding the face of the Vassar head. Stylistically they were probably handled in the artificial fashion seen in the twisted locks of the Berlin head (Pl. 75:c, d). We suspect that they sprouted, as it were, from just above and behind each ear as a detailed examination of surface condition and markings in these areas can reveal.18 Presumably the ringlets were long and descended close on each side of the neck. In this respect the head from Thmuis (Pl. 75:a, b) probably offers the more appropriate model. Undoubtedly then, the hair style of the Vassar head, when restored, could be termed a true Isis coiffure. Moreover, it seems quite possible that a clay diadem was added over the hair of the Vassar head. There is sufficient space to attach a narrow fillet between the forehead rolls and the hole now indented in the top of the head (Pl. 74:a). Another possibility is that the hole was once used to fasten a metal diadem. Outside its iconographical function as an attribute of a queen or goddess, a diadem would provide, as in the Thmuis sculpture (Pls. 74:a, 75:a, b), a visible support for the hanging curls and a transition from the wavy strands above.

The expression, the facial features, and the slightly irregular shape of the face would indicate that the Vassar head represents a specific queen of the later Hellenistic period, rather than the goddess Isis herself. Can we determine her identity? Portraits of the famous Cleopatra VII (reigned 51–30 B.C.) are well known both in the sculptured and glyptic arts,19 and because they bear no resemblance to the Vassar work we can reasonably eliminate this monarch. Our queen could then be one of the earlier Cleopatras of the 2nd century B.C. who wielded considerable power and strongly associated themselves with Isis. This would tend to leave us with a choice of either Cleopatra II (reigned 173–116 B.C.), wife of Ptolemy VI and later of Ptolemy VIII, or Cleopatra III who also became the wife of Ptolemy VIII in 142 B.C.20 Mainly because there are no certain coin images of either Cleopatra II or III, these two women are difficult to identify, let alone distinguish in plastic representations. Indeed the attempt to separate the two queens who ruled jointly for awhile is infrequently made. Even portraits sometimes identified as their predecessor Cleopatra I often

17 V. M. Strocka (“Aphroditekopf in Brescia,” JdI 82, 1967, pp. 121–131) has collected many examples of Ptolemaic marble heads which have been supplemented by clay. His nos. 4, 13, and 14 have a height of 16 cm., 7.5 cm., and 6.2 cm., respectively, and thus are comparable in scale to the Vassar head which is 11.9 cm. His no. 15 was carved from the big toe of a colossal statue, and no. 17, a female head from Alexandria, is a re-used architectural fragment. Examination of the Vassar head under ultraviolet light by Mr. Craine of the Fogg Museum of Art revealed that none of the carving or surface treatment is modern.

18 The upper edge of the large rectangular depression on the left at the rear seems to have determined the place from which the curls started since on the opposite side of the head and at the same level there are four incisions presumably to help secure the clay additions.

19 See Kyrieleis, pp. 124–125, with earlier bibliography.

20 On the lives and characters of the various Cleopatras of Ptolemaic Egypt see G. H. Macurdy, Hellenistic Queens, Baltimore 1932, pp. 141–223.
seem interrelated.21 Another reason for the confusion is that they all show a preference for the long ringlets of the Isis coiffure which apparently was worn officially by queens for the first time late in the reign of Cleopatra I.22

Late Ptolemaic seal impressions which were probably found at Edfu and are now in the Royal Ontario Museum may provide some clues.23 Some of the seals carrying portrayals of the later members of the Ptolemaic dynasty and of the goddess Isis show a coiffure strikingly analogous to that which can be posited for the Vassar head. For instance, a seal with jugate profiles, identified by J. G. Milne as those of Ptolemy VIII and his wife Cleopatra II, depict the king with what seems to be a thick coiled roll of hair extending across his forehead and then at his temple changing to a sideburn consisting of a thinner coil with cross-markings.24 A similar coil or roll follows Cleopatra’s brow, but the side of her face is obscured by her husband’s profile. One might hypothesize that there is a kind of family hairstyle worn here. More significant, however, is a seal impression (Pl. 74:b) which represents the beautiful profile of a woman identified by Milne as Cleopatra II.25 I submit that this clay seal impression affords the nearest parallel to the Vassar head. Similar are the unindented contour of the profile from forehead to tip of nose, the length of the nose itself and the widened tip, the small mouth which presses upward, the sloping chin, the roll of hair with cross-markings over the brow, the long corkscrew locks gathered behind and over the ear which reach the full length of the neck, and the wavy strands descending from a central part. Even the Isis attributes of corn ears, horns, and disk shown on the seal could have been attached to a diadem once fastened on the Vassar head.

As stated earlier the marble portrait in Berlin (Pl. 75:c, d) has been regarded by Kyrieleis as a possible likeness of Cleopatra II.26 This seems a reasonable conclusion because the profile, with its straight nose, small mouth, the plump and heavy chin, and of course the Isis locks are consistent with the image on the Edfu seal (Pl. 74:b). Finally the classicized face of a queen on a gem of Lykomedes in Boston, thought by more than one authority to be Cleopatra II, is generally analogous in form and feature to both the seal and the Berlin sculpture.27 My own conjecture is that the Vassar portrait could be an earlier rendition of the

21 See below, footnote 28.
24 Milne (op. cit.), p. 100. Good reproductions of this sealing can be found in Kyrieleis (pl. 100:5) and in Thompson (Oinochoai, pl. LXXIV:e). Kyrieleis (pp. 115–116) identifies the monarchs as Ptolemy X Alexander and either his mother Cleopatra III or his wife Cleopatra Berenice. Thompson (p. 94) tends to think the king is Ptolemy VIII and the queen either Cleopatra II or III.
25 Milne, op. cit. (footnote 23 above), no. 204, p. 100. Kyrieleis (pp. 114–115) is doubtful that this seal impression represents a queen rather than the goddess Isis herself.
26 Kyrieleis, p. 120.
27 Kyrieleis, p. 117, note 460, pl. 100:2, with earlier bibliography.
same queen who is depicted in the Berlin head, and Cleopatra II appears to be the best candidate.\textsuperscript{28}

While this does not admit of certainty, historical evidence makes it a quite plausible suggestion. Perhaps less powerful than her 3rd-century predecessor Arsinoe II, Cleopatra nevertheless was an extremely capable queen who ruled for an unusually long time. She assumed the throne first as the wife of her older brother Ptolemy VI Philometer, then for a short while with her younger brother, and subsequently for five years with both of them. Finally she reigned jointly (until 116 B.C.) with the same younger brother Ptolemy VIII Euergetes and his wife who was her own daughter, Cleopatra III. We can concur with the judgment of Grace H. Macurdy who admired her character and intellect and her ability to manage two difficult husbands, family interlacements, and triads of power.\textsuperscript{29} Dorothy Burr Thompson has recognized her fierceness.\textsuperscript{30} That Cleopatra II was the object of devotion to her subjects we know from the way they rallied to her side when Euergetes, who was loathed by the populace, was forced to flee to Cyprus in 131 B.C. Cleopatra apparently reigned alone in Alexandria from 131 until 127 when Euergetes returned.\textsuperscript{31} Around the year 130 would thus seem to be a period during which her portrait might well have proliferated, a date, in short, which is in accordance with the style of the Vassar head.\textsuperscript{32} Cleopatra III was both more dramatic and domineering than her mother, but she ruled for a shorter period. Both mother and daughter were outstanding women yet the absence of coin likenesses and their joint and complicated rule make it almost impossible to distinguish their portraits.

\textsuperscript{28} Cleopatra II has been tentatively recognized in other works of art which are more difficult, however, to relate to the Vassar sculpture. B. von Bothmer (\textit{Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period}, New York 1960, no. 113, p. 147, pl. 105) suggests that a statuette in the Metropolitan Museum in New York may be this queen. It bears a cartouche on the left arm inscribed with the name “Cleopatra”. The pose of the figure is thoroughly Egyptian, and the face with its wide thin mouth and huge eyes does not resemble that of the Vassar head. Richter (\textit{op. cit.} [footnote 22 above], p. 267, figs. 1850–1852) mentions that Louvre MA 3546 could be Cleopatra II or III. Except for the hair locks this sculpture has little in common with Vassar’s queen. Kyrieleis (M12, pp. 120–122, 128) notes its High Hellenistic style but does not commit himself to a specific identification. A vague resemblance can be detected between a faience mask in Princeton, a possible rendering of Cleopatra II according to Thompson (\textit{Oinochoai}, p. 93, pl. LXX:c), and our portrait. Mention should be made of other sculptures from Ptolemaic Egypt variously identified as one of the early Cleopatras in the guise of Isis, or as the goddess Isis herself, that are in a general way stylistically comparable to the Vassar work and thus serve to support the date at which we have already arrived: MA 3081 in the Louvre from Hermopolis is identified by Charbonneaux as Cleopatra I (\textit{MonPi6t} 50, 1958, p. 93); Isis on the Tazza Farnese portrays Cleopatra I according to Charbonneaux (\textit{op. cit.}, pp. 85–103) and Cleopatra III according to Kyrieleis (pp. 116–117), but compare Thompson, “Tazza Farnese”; perhaps Cleopatra I on the fragment of a faience medallion (Thompson, \textit{Oinochoai}, no. 276, pp. 92–93, pl. LXX).

\textsuperscript{29} Macurdy, \textit{op. cit.} (footnote 20 above), pp. 151–161. Professor Macurdy, we can guess, would have been gratified by the acquisition of this particular sculptured portrait by her own college.

\textsuperscript{30} Thompson, \textit{Oinochoai}, p. 93.


\textsuperscript{32} Kyrieleis (p. 117) proposes the date 131/130 for the gem of Lykometes in which the queen, probably Cleopatra II, wears the royal diadem to indicate she is the sole ruler during her husband’s absence.
The narrow rectangular channel at the back of the neck certifies that the Vassar portrait was part of a composite statue. A head of clay and marble and a body which probably consisted of clay or wood were joined by a dowel. We may surmise that the finished work represented a standing figure of the queen clothed in Isis dress. It may have been comparable in type to one, perhaps representing Cleopatra I, depicted in relief on a faience vase now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.\(^{33}\) The head on the Oxford jug, however, is turned too far to constitute a firm parallel. Another possibility is that the restored Vassar figure was comparable to a statuette in Rome in which the head is held almost frontally and the body is relatively rigid.\(^{34}\)

The modest scale of the Vassar portrait would indicate that the statuette of which it was a part was more a private than an official dedication in connection with the Ptolemaic ruler cult. Surviving portraits of the members of the Ptolemaic dynasty, compared to those from other Hellenistic kingdoms, are unusually plentiful. They come in all sizes and in many media but are so numerous they point to a strong popular as well as official ruler worship.\(^{35}\) Thus we may imagine a context for the Vassar head, surmounted as it was by a diadem and perhaps an Isis attribute and anchored to a draped body of clay or wood. It was probably made in Alexandria and set up either in a house or community shrine dedicated to Cleopatra II—Isis in or near the city.

Regardless of its diminutive size, the head, as a work of art, has a peculiar beauty; the crystalline whiteness of the marble and its alabaster-like translucency partly account for this effect.\(^{36}\) In every respect it compels us once more to appreciate the special nature and high quality of Alexandrian art during the Hellenistic period.

CHRISTINE MITCHELL HAVERLOCK

VASSAR COLLEGE
Department of Art
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

\(^{33}\) Thompson, “Tazza Farnese,” pl. D:93.

\(^{34}\) See R. Horn, “Stehende weibliche Gewandstatuen in der hellenistischen Plastik,” RömMitt, Ergänzungsheft 2, 1931, fig. 16:1.

\(^{35}\) That the Ptolemaic ruler cult affected the lives of the ordinary citizen is inferred from the supposed function of the faience oinochoai studied by Thompson (“Tazza Farnese,” pp. 118–119). On ruler worship under the Ptolemies see Thompson, Oinochoai, chaps. V, VIII; Fraser, op. cit. (footnote 31 above), pp. 213–276. Fraser discusses the identification of the queens with Isis (pp. 240–245). As Kyrieleis observes (pp. 140–145), inscriptive evidence also points to private dynastic worship.

\(^{36}\) On the Alexandrian method of carving marble, see Kyrieleis, pp. 131–135.
Vassar marble portrait. Photographs Vassar College Gallery of Art

CHRISTINE M. HAVELock: A PORTRAIT OF CLEOPATRA II(?) IN THE VASSAR COLLEGE GALLERY OF ART
a. Vassar marble portrait, top of head. Photograph
Vassar College Gallery of Art

b. Seal impression of Cleopatra II from Edfu.
Courtesy, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
a. Front  
Goddess Isis, Cairo. Photographs German Archaeological Institute, Cairo

b. Profile to left

c. Profile to right

Hellenistic queen, Pergamon Museum, Berlin  
Photographs after Kyrieleis, *Bildnisse der Ptolemäer*, pl. 105

CHRISTINE M. HAVELOCK: A PORTRAIT OF CLEOPATRA II(?) IN THE VASSAR COLLEGE GALLERY OF ART