THE Hellenistic Rulers and Their Poets.
SILENCING DANGEROUS CRITICS?*

The beginning of the reign of Ptolemy VII Euergetes II in the year 145 BC following the death of his brother Ptolemy VI Philometor was described in a very negative way by ancient authors. According to Athenaeus Ptolemy who ruled over Egypt... received from the Alexandrians appropriately the name of Malefactor. For he murdered many of the Alexandrians; not a few he sent into exile, and filled the islands and towns with men who had grown up with his brother — philologians, philosophers, mathematicians, musicians, painters, athletic trainers, physicians, and many other men of skill in their profession.

It is true that anecdotal tradition, as we find it here, is mostly of tendentious origin, «but the course of the events suggests that the gossip-mon-
gers had more than enough genuine material to work with. The epithet Φύσκων (potbelly), which had been conferred on him by his scholarly opponents, also stands for the unfavourable reputation Ptolemy had since then. Even though the true extent of pogroms and expulsions can only be assessed with difficulty, there is, at first glance, a contrast between the far reaching expulsion of intellectual potential at the Ptolemaic court and the king’s acknowledged intellectual interests. The latter are evident in the writing of twenty-four books ‘Hypomnemata’.

This contrast points at two basic factors of Hellenistic rule, which only at first sight do not correlate.

(1) An Hellenistic ruler has in his territory — τὰ πράγματα τῆς βασιλείας —, especially at his court, the unlimited right to decide about life or death. Without having to take any considerations and as long as he has executing helpers at his disposal, he can theoretically arrest any person, have him or her punished or expelled from his territory. Such


6 FGrHist 234, see the commentary by F. Jacoby (ii b, p. 658f.); cf. R. Pfeiffer, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 260, there also further information about the list of Alexandrian librarians in P. Oxy. X 1241.

7 This does not necessarily have to correlate with today’s understanding of the ‘judiciary’ (for the ruler’s ‘authorization’ see J. Modrzewski, Zum Justizwesen der Ptolemäer, ZRG 80, 1963, p. 42-82, esp. 44ff.; H.J. Wolff, Das Justizwesen der Ptolemäer, Munich 1970, p. 5ff.), especially because it is not evident whether in the following cases one had stuck to the formalities at all. Cf. A. Heuss, Stadt und Herrscher des Hellenismus in ihren staats- und völkerrechtlichen Beziehungen (Klio, Beihft 39), Leipzig 1937, there information on the notion of ‘rule’ (Herrschaft), referring to the relations between
measures could be essential for the continuance of his own rule, however, they could also be regarded as sheer arbitrariness and have negative effects on the ruler’s reputation. The ruler was also integrated into the interactive structures of his court, i.e. he consulted his φίλοι, preferred opinions and interests of one faction or the other — or he tried a solo effort, which could, however, isolate him.

(2) It was advantageous for a ruler’s reputation, if libraries and research institutions, as well as eminent authorities in the fields of scholarship, poetry and the fine arts were part of his court. Among his own Greek subjects, and among other kings of the Greek world and among the free poleis the mere presence of intellectuals at his court granted him remarkable prestige. Poets and other artists were evidently not rigidly forced to become small cogwheels in the clock-work mechanism of the ruler’s propaganda, neither did they have to follow strict guide-lines throughout. They had a certain amount of scope. Their sheer presence, the contact with them, as well as their appearance at festivities for the court, the capital and foreign visitors were what mattered most to the ruler.

The example from Ptolemaic Alexandria shows that the king could find himself in situations, in which he had to decide with regard to the two described factors: was the expulsion of intellectuals, some of them friends of his murdered brother, more important, and possible damage to his image in the outside world had to be accepted? Or could the king’s state and king; B.-J. Müller, Ptolemaeus II. Philadelphus als Gesetzgeber, Diss. Köln 1968; H.-J. Gehrike, Der siegreiche König. Überlegungen zur Hellenistischen Monarchie, AKG 64 (1982), p. 247-277, here: 248f.


10 The reception of Egyptian-pharaonic aspects in Hellenistic poetry with the aim of making contents lucid for a Greek audience is controversial; see on this most recently an impressive study of L. Könen, The Ptolemaic King as a Religious Figure, in: A. Bulloch et al. (eds.), Images and Ideologies. Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World, Berkeley 1993, p. 25-119 (with additional remarks by R. Hunter, TLS 4802, 14 April 1995, p. 7), cf. also my differing view: G. Weber, Dichtung und höfische Gesellschaft. Die Rezeption von Zeitgeschichte am Hof der ersten drei Ptolemäer (Hermes, Einzelschriften 62), Stuttgart 1993, p. 369ff.

position at his court have been harmed by literary agitation and political intrigue against him? Our source material does not enable us to say anything about the second possibility, since we do not have corresponding pamphlets. However, especially Ptolemy VIII was by no means somebody who hated intellectuals, instead, he had grown up in the very environment that had now gotten under attack. Regardless of a possibly genuine threat, the expulsions and executions seem like an irrational sweeping blow in the heat of the moment. For Ptolemy sending critics into exile as a means to silence them had apparently been sufficient. The event under Ptolemy is particularly spectacular because of its relevance for the history of classical philology, yet it is certainly not unique. However, especially anecdotal tradition offers numerous separate examples of expelled and executed intellectuals. Subject of the following exposition will be cases in which rulers did not exile, but killed the literati: the cases in question are Theocritus under Antigonus I Monophthalmus, Sotades of Maroneia under Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and Daphidas of Telmessus under the Attalids. They have not been subject of a common interpretation. Even though they might only be 'minor' or occasional poets, it is still remarkable that not only the occurrences as such, but also parts of their literature, especially epigrams and other verses, have come down to us.

12 Cf. M.I. Finley, Censorship in Classical Antiquity, TLS 76 (1977), p. 923-925: «Death remains the most certain way of preventing anything 'immoral, heretical, or offensive or injurious to the State'... from being propagated. (923)... Remove a man physically from his audience and the danger he represents is also removed» (924).

13 The ancient biographers were always interested in the circumstances of the poets' deaths, also in democratic Athens, cf. M.R. Lefkowitz, The Lives of the Greek Poets, London 1981, p. 72f., 85f. and 96f. In De lib. educ. 14 (= Mor. 10f), quoted in n. 24, Plutarch describes the examples of Sotades and Theocritus as belonging to a τύπος (other cases of which are not mentioned). This, however, does not a priori imply the fictionality of the examples; the same is true for the fact of differing versions or ways of dying in these cases.

14 C. Franco, Teocrito di Chio, Athenaeum 79 (1991), p. 445-458, esp. 445 and 454 (with n. 37), refers to Sotades and Theodorus (cf. n. 110). W. Völcker-Janssen, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 84, gives all the examples that will be examined here when writing about the κόλακες at the courts (see n. 22) — Theocritus is not mentioned explicitly; however, the respective contexts are neglected; similarly F.-J. Brecht, Stoff und Form des griechischen Spottepigramms, Diss. Freiburg/Brsg. 1922, p. 11ff., with more examples.

15 None of the poets that are studied here is mentioned in G.O. Hutchinson, Hellenistic Poetry, Oxford 1988; only scarce hints in F. Susemihl, Geschichte der griechischen Literatur in der Alexandrinerzeit, 2 vols., Leipzig 1891-1892, and in A. Lesky, Geschichte der griechischen Literatur, Bern–Munich 1971.

16 This appears to be an important argument to me, if one wants to recur to the 'worth' of the anecdotes. For the very course of the tradition down to Plutarch or Athenaeus as final points, as like as the motives for recording them can only be reconstructed with difficulty.
Usually the scenario was more or less the same: a poet picked out critical points about the ruler’s person or his dynasty as a central theme in open or concealed mockery. As a result the granted patronage came to an end, or the king had poets who did not live at his court arrested and eliminated. In that there is a recurrent connection between the attack on the ruler by means of poetry and the subsequent castigation. The cases on hand might have awoken interest, since with them παρησία, which was connected with the democratic polis, had been upheld. The central literary genres were the satire of the Attic comedy and the Hellenistic mock-epigram, coming into effect, for example, as σκῶμμα during the symposion. However, even the παρησία in the poleis was subject to some restrictions and was not always respected, either. Talking about Hellenistic times we will have to take into account a great amount of idealization with regard to the changed political situation. This led to some exaggeration in the anecdotal tradition.


19 For the terms λοίδορία, κυκτήγορία etc. see S. Halliwell, The Use of Laughter in Greek Culture, CQ 41 (1991), p. 279-296, esp. 292ff.; for the legislation directed against this in 5th-cent. Athens cf. S. Halliwell, art. cit. (n. 17), p. 49-54, who, moreover (63ff.), emphasizes that the attacks of ὄνοματι κομιοδεῖν became clearly less comparing the Old, Middle and New Comedy. The reasons for this are extraordinarily complex, cf. M.I. Finley, art. cit. (n. 12), p. 925. Furthermore, it is informative that, according to Halliwell, there was also a limit for mockery etc. in Athens, which was only defined in connection «with especially severe political stresses» (p. 70) and then led to consequences; cf. also the statement of the Attic demos with regard to the limits of tolerating mockery in Ps.-Xen., Ath. Pol. 2.18. Opposed to that is M.I. Finley, art. cit. (n. 12), p. 923: «there seems to have been no limit to freedom of defamation... in the law courts...». For the Hellenistic situation cf. A. Momigliano, The Social Structure of the Ancient City. Freedom of Speech and Religious Tolerance in the Ancient World, in: id., Sesto Contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico, Rome 1980 [originally 1974], vol. II, p. 459-476, esp. 465ff.; M. Furhmann, Lizenzen und Tabus des Lachens. Zur sozialen Grammatik der hellenistisch-römischen Komödie, AU 29 (1986), p. 20-43, esp. 24ff.

20 M.I. Finley, art. cit. (n. 12), p. 925, justifiably warns of overestimating the practice of παρησία.
The examples to be dealt with here show yet another characteristic: it has to do with the poets’ behaviour, often in the context of the tendency of their poetry, on the other hand, it has to do with the characterization of the positive or negative features of the rulers. The relation to reality of this kind of anti-monarchic agitation cannot be verified in most cases, in my eyes, however, this gives no justification to dismiss the examples at large as unhistorical, and to assign them rather to the ideas of Hellenistic courts, prevailing in Greece in the first and second century AD, than to Hellenistic times proper.

In the following an attempt is to be made to look into the question of whether the described constellation is of a structural kind and whether the reasons for the execution of the intellectuals were actually their criticisms. For methodical reasons we therefore need to put a questionmark behind the subtitle «Silencing the Critics».

First of all the basic situation at Hellenistic courts is to be investigated and one will have to look for precursors. Then the poets, which have already been mentioned, will be examined closely. In doing so, it is imperative to capture the respective situation in which such conflicts arose, with regard to the political and atmospheric background. For this purpose we need to bear in mind the following central questions:

1. What was the range of statements, such as mockery and irony, a Hellenistic ruler was willing to endure, or in other words: what were the ‘limits of clemency’, or how far reached his tolerance towards a δικρασία γλώττης or ἰκανίας παραρτησία?
2. Why did a ruler act-


22 M.R. LEFKOWITZ, op. cit. (n. 13), using the fully handed down lives of poets, he has demonstrated to what great extent information from the authors’ works were employed to ‘construct’ their biographies. As an example cf. also C. PELLING, Childhood and Personality in Biography, in: id. (ed.), Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature, Oxford 1990, p. 213-244, esp. 216ff. Whether the examples in question derive from biographies, which had to achieve the greatest possible degree of completeness, remains doubtful, as much as they could also have to be seen in the context of historical monographs.


24 Cf. Plut., De lib. educ. 14 (= Mor. 10f) in the introduction to his examples of Sotades and Theocritus μυρίους δ’ ἔγοι’ οἶδ’ ἀκούσας τάς μεγίστας συμφοράς περιπεσόντας διὰ τὴν τῆς γλώττης ἄκρασίαν. Ὄν τούς ἄλλους παραλιπών ἐνός ἢ δυεῖν ἐνεκεν ἐπιμνηθήσομαι («I have heard of countless men who have fallen into the greatest misfortunes through intemperate speech. Of these I shall mention one or two
ally make use of his right to decide on life or death, and to what extent did he have the power to do so? When was mere exiling no longer sufficient? Jane Hornblower describes the context as follows: «How far a writer could go in his criticisms evidently depended on the circumstances and on the monarch». Or in the words of the late Berlin professor of Classics (Humboldt University), Kurt Treu, writing in 1988, who, together with his family, had to suffer the repressions of the East German regime for decades: «Wenn ein Sotades von Maroneia wegen massiven Spottes die persönliche Rache des Monarchen erduldet, so wird das eben deshalb so hervorgehoben, weil es als ungewöhnlich auffiel. Normalerweise endete — das zeigt sich auch an Sotades — der Zwang zur Affirmation spätestens an der Landesgrenze, und die war jederzeit überschreitbar»25. (3) Are critical statements only a singular occurrence with the author, or do they represent broader opposition against a certain ruler or aspects of his rule?

What then remains to be examined is, whether similar situations have come down to us with regard to other intellectuals, as well, or whether they affect especially poets. Other executions commanded by the kings, for instance, those of family members, are not going to be subject of this article.

II

First of all, a few words on the basic situation: a significant characteristic of Hellenism is the establishment of courts, at which a court society developed26. Their common denominator was both the exertion of power over their Greek and non-Greek subjects and the display of power before the eyes of the entire Greek world. Members of these court societies, which were almost completely dominated by Greeks and Macedonians as typical and omit the rest»). Sotades' behaviour is then qualified as ἀκαίρος λαλία, Theocritus' as θυροστομία and μανία (θυροστομία can also be found in Polyb. VIII 10.1, referring to Theopompus). The second set of ideas in Athen. XIV 4.620f. For Greek notions of ridicule, laughter etc. cf. S. Halliwell, art. cit. (n. 19).


in the 3rd century BC, were next to the core of the ruler’s family, his friends and various officials, but also men of letters of different genres. A structural weakness was the disparate composition of the court societies and their sole concentration towards the person of the king: if he failed to achieve the integration of the individuals by means of charisma, military success or the distribution of favours, his rule could be at stake27. Since the court society at first had an informal character, competitive relationships among the members, rankings concerning the proximity to the ruler and success in the fulfilment of assigned tasks played an important role28. In the 2nd century BC the court system was increasingly formalized, among other things by means of court titles indicating an order of rank, which regulated promotion and proximity to the king29. Polybius shows in his appreciation of the sixth Ptolemy what kinds of contact could be maintained at court: Ptolemy «was mild and kind-hearted as ever one of his ancestors. The greatest proof for this is that he, firstly, not executed any of his friends because of any accusa-

28 Going over to another court society was, in case of appropriately competent achievements, possible, without further ado; two examples would be Archias, Ptolemaic governor on Cyprus (W. PEREMANS et al., Prosopographia Ptolemaica VI: La cour, les relations internationales et les possessio­n extérieures, la vie culturelle (n°1 14479-17250), Leuven 1968, 15037 [= PP VI]; L. MOOREN, The Aulic Titulature in Ptolemaic Egypt. Introduction and Prosopography, Brussels 1975, no. 0351; R.S. BAGNALL, The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions outside Egypt, Leiden 1976, no. 5; J. HOPP, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der letzten Attaliden [Vestigia, 25], Munich 1977, p. 82f.), who, according to Polyb. XXXIII 5, wanted to sell his province for 500 talents to Demetrius I in 158/7 BC (cf. L. MOOREN, Korruption in der hellenistischen Führungs­schicht, in: W. SCHULLER [ed.], Korruption im Altertum, Munich–Vienna 1982, p. 93-101, here 94), and the Cretan Bolis (PP VI 14750; cf. W. HUSS, Untersuchungen zur Außenpolitik Ptolemaios’ IV. [Münchener Beiträge zur Papyro­sforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte, 69], München 1976, p. 85f. and 91ff.), who, according to Polyb. VIII 15.1ff., was ordered by Sosibius to get in contact with Achaues in order to save him, received the offered reward of 10 talents, and then betrayed Achaues to Antiochus.
tion; yet I do believe that of the other Alexandrians none has been killed, either...»

One means to achieve this could have been poetry, by making the ruler and his deeds central themes. Symposia and feasts at court, such as innumerable Ptolemaieia, Antigoneia etc., were especially suitable for publication; or one could also put inscriptions on exceptional buildings. Mentioning Callimachus, the Syracusan Theocritus, and Posidippus may suffice here.

Epigrams can be found frequently in this context, especially since their fictitious character and their detachment from their original purpose became habitual in Hellenistic times. Nonetheless, Hellenistic poetry, which combined innovations with references to previous literature, was so complex that its manifold allusions could not be appreciated by everybody. Constitutive elements were irony, a sense of humour, and ambiguity. The line between flattery and criticism appears to have been extremely fine, communication was not infrequently insincere. Therefore the polarization between the alternatives 'propaganda' and 'opposition' does not seem very helpful to reach an adequate understanding of this kind of poetry.

30 Polyb. XXXIX 7:... στιμέαν δὲ τούτο μέγιστον δὲ πρῶτον μὲν οὐδένα τῶν εαυτοῦ φιλῶν ἐπ᾽ οὐδενὶ τῶν ἐγκλημάτων ἐπανείλετο. For the assessment cf. G. Hölbl, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 171 with n. 62. Killing the father’s philoi seems to have been a kind of bad tradition, which was practised, for example, by Ptolemy IV (cf. Polyb. V 34.1, see W. Völcker-Janssen, op. cit. [n. 11], p. 52), Perseus (see L. Moore, op. cit. [n. 28, 1982], p. 93f.; W. Völcker-Janssen, op. cit., p. 51ff.) and Attalus III (cf. Diod. XXXIV 3 and J. Hopp, op. cit. [n. 28], p. 116-120).


to the same extent apostrophizing all poets as κόλακες (flatterers) is not helpful to comprehend the interactive structures of the court society\(^{34}\).

It had to be caused by special circumstances, however, that sharp criticism was directed against the person of the ruler. The same is true for poets, some of them formerly at court themselves, who directed their attacks from the outside, and certainly with by no means negligible effects on the public\(^{35}\).

Looking for earlier examples, the classical polis will have to be ruled out, but both the existence of courts and the association of rulers with poets had already been common in pre-Hellenistic times\(^ {36}\). At the court of the tyrant Dionysius I in Syracuse we find two precedents for the expounded connection, however, without the wording of the poems: Dionysius was said to have murdered the tragedian Antiphon. Even though no reasons have come down to us, the reaction of the tyrant might have had something to do with the poet’s mockery of Dionysius’ attempts to produce poetry himself; apparently the tyrant was rather sensitive on this point\(^ {37}\). Dionysius is also said to have sent Philoxenus of Cythera, the poet of dithyrambs, to the quarries. He might have infuriated the tyrant with his Κύκλωψ\(^ {38}\). The Cyclops, as he had been described in the Odyssey and whose portrait had become, against the background of literary parody, an important part of the literary canon, represents the counterimage of the polis: he is lawless and anti-social\(^ {39}\).

\(^{34}\) Thus W. Völcker-Janssen, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 82ff., who grossly underestimates the scope of the poets, which they certainly enjoyed.

\(^{35}\) M.I. Finley, art. cit. (n. 12), p. 923f., asks in this context the question regarding the threads of communication and their effects: a ruler was never able to destroy all existing copies of a defamatory tract, moreover, a significant part of the ‘mock-genre’ was passed on orally.


\(^{38}\) G. Weber, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 70 with n. 362, with the context and further references.

What seems to be common to both examples under Dionysius, is that the tyrant's personal vanity had been affected, since further implications are not known to us. Due to his status as autocrat of a polis, who was in contact with powers like Athens and Sparta, it was of utmost importance to Dionysius not to reveal any weakness in his self-portrayal. Not only in this respect, one may call Dionysius a precursor of Hellenistic attitudes.

In this context, obviously, one has also to refer to Alexander the Great: at his court there were intellectuals, too, especially poets, who, however, did not produce anything of quality, at best eulogies. It is important for our context that with Aristotle's nephew Callisthenes a 'historian' had especially been employed to record the events during the campaign; by the help of these, public opinion in Greece was to be influenced. In 327 BC Alexander had Callisthenes executed. His death is the end of the well-known series, which, beginning with Philotas, comprised Parmenion and Clitus. For the latter, who had particularly and finally enraged Alexander with a Euripides quotation, he mourned at least when he was sober. According to Arrian, Callisthenes had

40 Thus explicitly H.H. Schmitt, Zur Inszenierung des Privatlebens des hellenistischen Herrschers, in: J. Seibert (ed.), Hellenistische Studien. Gedenkschrift H. Bengtson, München 1991, p. 75-86, here 81. Somewhat too sweeping a statement, Finley's evaluation (art. cit. [n. 12], p. 923), that freedom of political comments was «more or less non-existent under the tyrants or the autocratic Hellenistic and Roman Monarchs».
demanded that Alexander should rule oōdē βία, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ, for otherwise he would become estranged from Macedonian tradition. Callisthenes’ death was, however, not caused by Alexander’s being dissatisfied with the way he fulfilled his task, and did not have anything to do with a personal insult, either. Instead, there was a connection with the argument about proskynesis among the Macedonian ruling class. Thus, it becomes evident that the physical preservation of rule had priority over propagandistic functions and measures for maintaining the royal image.

III

Theocritus of Chios embodies the kind of ‘politician’, whose intellectual stance has, at least in parts, still left traces. What has come down to us is an early epigram directed against Aristotle, which is peppered

47 Moreover, it is remarkable that Arrian (Anab. IV 14.2-4) gives different versions for Callisthenes’ death: caused by disease after a prolonged imprisonment or by breaking on the wheel and hanging. The first version «mitigates Alexander’s guilt and probably represents an official version», cf. W.Z. Rubinsohn, art. cit. (n. 41), p. 1325f.
49 For his works cf. Suda, s.v. Θέοκριτος (II 697, Θ166, ed. Adler) and Strab. XIV 4, 645, here once referred as ῥήτωρ, at another point as σοφιστής (cf. also Athenaeus and Plutarch), see also FHG II 86ff. ed. Müller = FGrHist 760, for this C. Franco, art. cit. (n. 14), p. 445f. In Ep. 27 Gow = AP IX 434 the Syracusan Theocritus clearly dissociates himself from his Chian namesake, the epigram has perhaps to be seen as beginning of an edition: Ἄλλος ὁ Χῖος, ἐγὼ δὲ Θεόκριτος δὲ τάδ᾽ ἐγραμμα ἡ ἀεὶ ἀπὸ τῶν πολλῶν εἰμὶ Σύρακουσίων, ἠ νός Πραξιτόραμεν περικλεῖται τε Φιλίννας ἢ Μοῦσαν δ᾽ ὀθείναν οὔτιν ἐφελκοσύμπι οῦ «The Chian is another, but I, Theocritus, the author of these works, am a Syracusan, one among many, the son of Praxagoras and renowned Philinna, and I have taken to myself no alien muse». The discussion of this, also concerning its authenticity, in A.S.F. Gow, Theocritus II, Cambridge 1952, p. 549f.; C. Franco, art. cit. (n. 14), p. 457f. Thus, it becomes evident that even one or two generations later the Chian must have been a well-known figure.
with numerous allusions to the Platonic dialogues and sexual discredit. All in all this is an agitation against Aristotle’s affinity to Macedonia.

Proof for that can be found in several anecdotes, which put Theocritus into opposition against Theopompus, his fellow citizen, and the Macedonian kings. He attacked especially Alexander sharp-wittedly with a Homeric verse, when Alexander asked the Chians for crimson for his Staipoi. This can only be explained, knowing that Theocritus had been involved in the conflict about a pro-Persian or pro-Macedonian line in his home town. The scant traces of written records render an anti-Macedonian and anti-monarchic inclination of Theocritus probable.

Chios had presumably in 319/18 BC been occupied by Antigonus. During the years after that (and before the death of Antigonus in 301 BC) there had existed contact between the Successor and Theocritus, and


here the situation occurred that led to the Chian’s execution\(^{54}\): the by no means minor question whether Theocritus had spent some time at the court of Antigonus, cannot be answered conclusively\(^{55}\). Theocritus’ death is recorded by Plutarch and Macrobius. Plutarch reports in a passage dealing with jests about physical defects that Antigonus himself could laugh about his one-eyedness, Theocritus, however, he had killed (for it):

Indeed, Antigonus, though it was his habit to make fun of himself about his one eye and once, when he received a petition written in big letters, he said, «This is clear even to a blind man», — the same Antigonus nevertheless put to death Theocritus of Chios because, when someone said, «Stand before the eyes of the king, and you will be saved», Theocritus replied, «The Salvation you recommend to me is impossible»\(^{56}\).

Macrobius gives a rather similar account (Sat. VII 3.12). What is remarkable here, is the contrast between the ruler’s ability to laugh about himself and how he also tolerates others to laugh about him, and his «violent reaction to the irony of Theocritus»\(^{57}\). If this scene was recorded without any context and just because it was relevant for the topic, then it seems to presuppose some transgression by Theocritus. The reference to the king’s one-eyedness accordingly stands for a brusque and haughty rejection of the *clementia regis*, as Macrobius puts it explicitly\(^{58}\).


\(^{55}\) R.A. BILLOWS, *op. cit.* (n. 48), p. 311, is sure that Theocritus «was living at Antigonus’ court at the time».


In the Plutarch passage the courtly integration becomes more evident: Theocritus provoked the king εἶς οὖ μετρίαν ὅργῃν, when he not only did not comply with the request to speak with the king (unfortunately the subject is not mentioned), but also when he ridiculed the king as Κύκλωψ; for Theocritus said to the ἄρχομέγερος (chief-cook) Eutropion, who acted as messenger: «I know very well that you want to serve me up raw to your Cyclops»59. First of all, it is remarkable that Antigonus entrusted the ‘chief-cook’ with this ‘mission’. Possibly there might, however, be some pun involved, as Theocritus labels the messenger as ‘slaughterer’ or ‘butcher’. Thus, it would be due to a misinterpretation by Plutarch not to connect these with his profession as a cook60. Accordingly, the commander of the royal guards is called ἄρχομέγερος in the Septuaginta text of Daniel 2.14, which might also have been the term at other Oriental courts61. Antigonos’ following messengers were less patient: πέμψας ἀνείλε τὸν Ἡσέκρητον

The question to be asked is, what did actually lead to Theocritus’ death, or in other words: did the ruler’s ὅργη suffice for it62? There are very good reasons for the assumption that «the inexorable stubbornness and insolence of Theocritus» will not have been the only and decisive factor63. We do not know anything about the historical context, possible political activities of Theocritus, or courtly intrigues. However, there seems to be more behind this story as it is given by the ancient authors: the basic conflict of regal claims to power versus the citizens’ insisting on their own identity and self-determination64. The struggle for an identity both as citizen and subject had only just begun. During the severe

60 Thus already suspected by R. Sealey, quoted by R.A. Billows, op. cit. (n. 48), p. 386: «Hence Eutropion was doubtless no other than a military officer — perhaps the captain of Antigonos’s bodyguard? — whom Theokritos accused of being Antigonos’s chief ‘butcher’».
61 Cf. as references from Hellenistic times LXX Gen 37.36, 39.1, 41.10 (for the court of the Pharaohs); Jer 52.12ff. (for the Babylonian court). Prior to Plutarch the term had only, perhaps not surprisingly, been used by Philo Judaeus.
62 Ancient philosophy, especially in a moral context, has exhaustively dealt with this question. Numerous examples can be found in Seneca’s dialogue De ira III 17ff. and in Plut., De cohib. ira (= Mor. 452f-464d), cf. R. Malchow, op. cit. (n. 57), p. 487ff.
63 Thus S.T. Teodorsson, art. cit. (n. 23), p. 381.
64 Cf. C. Franco, art. cit. (n. 14), p. 454: «... lo svolgimento dell’episodio dimostra come la tradizione antica vedesse nell’opposizione antimarchica, certo intesa come difesa personalmente pertecipata della libertà personale e cittadina, un punto qualificante la caratterizzazione di Teocrito». 
clashes over Alexander’s legacy, however, it seemed advisable to eliminate notorious opposition of single people or opinion-leaders in one’s own city and territory.

IV

Sotades of Maroneia on Crete was apparently associated with the courts of Lysimachus and of the second Ptolemy: Athenaeus records that he “abused first King Lysimachus while he was in Alexandria, then Ptolemy Philadelphus in the presence of Lysimachus, and in fact other kings in other cities.” In contrast to Theocritus, a number of his poems dealing with mythological and political topics have come down to us. The conflict with Ptolemy led to his death, about which there are different versions, similar to the case of Callisthenes: in a poem on the occasion of the king’s wedding with his full sister Arsinoe (after 278 BC), the former wife of Lysimachus, there was the verse “Thou thrustest thy prick into an unholy opening.” And Plutarch writes: “thereafter he rotted in prison for many years; and so suffered condign punishment for...


66 Athen. XIV 620ff.: κακοῦ μὲν εἰπόντος Λυσιμαχὸν τὸν βασιλέα ἐν Ἀλεξάνδρει, Πτολεμαῖον δὲ τὸν Φιλάδελφον παρὰ Λυσιμάχῳ, καὶ ἄλλους τῶν βασιλέων ἐν ἄλλας τῶν πόλεων δίσπερ τῆς δεοῦσας ἐπչεῖ τιμορίας. In this case Carystius of Pergamum and the Hypomnemata by Hegesander of Delphi are the sources of Athenaeus (on both authors of the 2nd cent. BC cf. F. Jacoby, RE VII 2, 1912, col. 2600-2602, and X 2 (1919), col. 2254ff.; FHG IV 359 and 415; not in FGrHist). H.S. Lund, op. cit. (n. 21) does not mention Sotades in his chapter «Court and Courtiers» (p. 178-182).

67 Cf. L. Escher, De Sotadis Maronitae reliquis, Diss. Gießen 1913, and Fr. 1-24 in I.U. Powell, Collectanea Alexandrina. Reliquiae minoris poetarum Graecorum aetatis Ptolemaicae 323-146 A.C., Oxford 1925, p. 238-245, one has to remember that only Fr. 1-4 are certifiably authentic. According to Strab. XIV 41.648 ἧρξε δὲ Σωταός μὲν πρότος τοῦ κιναιδολογεῖν, similarly Athen. XIV 620e.

his untimely talking. According to Athenaeus, Sotades left Alexandria; before that, however, he said to Ptolemy πολλά ... καὶ ἄλλα δεινά, among others the verse quoted. Then the Ptolemaic strategos Patroclus arrested him, who had already thought he had escaped the danger, and sank him in the sea in a coffin of lead. There have been attempts to harmonize both versions by establishing a chronological order of arrest, flight, and sinking. This is, however, not convincing as we do not know the danger (κίνδυνος) that is mentioned in the text.

It is generally assumed that Sotades expressed in this obscene jest the Greek disapproval of Ptolemaic sibling marriage, and had thus incurred the king's anger. That a sibling marriage had been intended can be confirmed with Pretagostini by bringing Fr. 16 into play, which alludes possibly in its first verse to the alliance of Zeus and Hera. This connection is also confirmed by references in Theocritus of Syracuse and Callimachus, which treat alliances between brothers and sisters positively. Moreover, the legitimacy of Ptolemy's rule is discredited by the use of the ambiguous term κέντρον, which can stand for the male sexual organ, and can also be an emblem of the tyrant.
Sotades was, and this we have to keep in mind when considering the king’s reaction, well-known for his ceaseless attacks. The Suda article in an index of his works refers to a poem called εἰς Βελεστίκην and written by Sotades. Scholars generally agree that this Belestiche or Bilistiche must be one of Ptolemy II’s mistresses, particularly because the name is extremely uncommon\textsuperscript{76}. In 268 BC and in 264 BC Bilistiche had won in Olympia, for 251/50 BC she is verified as canephore of the deified Arsinoe, and, moreover, she was worshipped as Aphrodite Bilistiche\textsuperscript{77}. It is not evident from the title, whether the poem as such had a positive or negative bias\textsuperscript{78}, the over-all context, however, would suggest a verbal attack. And yet, in my eyes, the execution of Sotades because of the verses on sibling marriage only makes sense if there had been a connection to the current state of affairs. After Arsinoe’s death in 268 BC there was no such connection any more. The verses on Bilistiche, on the other hand, belong most likely to the period after 268 BC, as it clashes with the general view of the 2nd Arsinoe to have tolerated a mistress with Ptolemy\textsuperscript{79).

\textsuperscript{76} Fr. 5 Powell. For example, there is no entry in the volumes of the Lexicon of Greek Personal Names which have been published so far. The origin of Bilistiche is said to be Macedonia or Argos, references in PP VI 14717, p. 42. The references from TLG and from the PHI Disk #7 all refer to the same person. On the formation of the name cf. J. and L. ROBERT, BE 1954, p. 116f.

\textsuperscript{77} Cf. J. KIRCHNER, art. Belistiche, RE III 1 (1897), col. 240; esp. PP VI 14717; P.M. FRASER, op. cit. (n. 4), II, p. 210 (n. 206) and 240; esp. A. CAMERON, Two Mistresses of Ptolemy Philadelphia, GRBS 31 (1990), p. 287-311, 295ff.; G. WEBER, op. cit. (n. 10), p. 138 with n. 2 and 269f., with further bibliographical notes. G. HÖLBL, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 291 (n. 3), sets forth the hypothesis that Bilistiche could be the mother of Ptolemy Andromachou, since both of them had high offices as priestesses in the same year (thus already K. BURASELIS, Das hellenistische Makedonien und die Ägäis. Forschungen zur Politik des Kassandros und der ersten drei Antigoniden im Ägäischen Meer und in Westkleinasien [Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrussforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte, 73], Munich 1982, p. 133, for the further context), cf. W. CLARYSSE — G. VAN DER VEKEN, op. cit. (n. 70), no. 40.

\textsuperscript{78} Cf. LSJ, s.v. εἰς, IVB: «of the subject of a work, esp. in titles...» πρός + acc. would be positive, κατά + gen. negative; possibly this is not the original title, or there might have occured a conscious concealment of its true content. P.M. FRASER, op. cit. (n. 4), I, p. 118, goes too far, according to him Sotades had attacked both Bilistiche and Ptolemy; cf. also A. CAMERON, art. cit. (n. 77), p. 300ff., who brings out the implications of a positive poem on Bilistiche written by Posidippus (AP V 202).

\textsuperscript{79} It is, however, possible that Bilistiche had already prior to the marriage with his sister been in Ptolemy’s entourage. An assessment using moral standards, as, for example, in G. HÖLBL, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 45, is utterly inadequate. On Arsinoe cf. e.g. S.M. BURSTEIN, Arsinoe II Philadelphos. A Revisionist View, in: W.L. ADAMS — E.N. BORZA (eds.), Philipp II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage, Washington 1982, p. 197-212; H. HAUBEN, Arsinoë II et la politique extérieure de l’Egypte, in: E. VAN ’T DACK et al. (eds.), Egypt and the Hellenistic World (Studia Hellenistica, 24), Leuven 1983, p. 99-127; G. WEBER, op. cit. (n. 10), p. 254 (n. 1) to 263.
Thus, one will no longer insist on an unmitigated connection between the attack on a sibling marriage and subsequent punishment. Apparently a number of incidents must have added up to provoke the king’s drastic measure; attributing this merely to Sotades’ poetry would, despite the rulers’ occasionally great sensitivity, mean overestimating the importance of one single voice. In any case, Sotades was not one of the poets who could easily be integrated into court society. And there is no evidence, either, justifying the claim that he was the mouthpiece of some broader Greek opposition outside the courtly environment.

A third example. The following distich by Daphidas of Telmessus has come down to us in Strabo: «Purple stripes, filings of the treasure of Lysimachus, ye rule Lydians and Phrygia».

With regard to the context we learn that the Daphidas was crucified on the mountain Thorax near Magnesia on Meander, since he had mocked βασιλέας in these very verses; moreover, according to a λόγιον he had received a prophecy from the Delphic oracle to beware of θόροςιζ (Strab.)

80 Thus also M. Launey, art. cit. (n. 65), p. 43, who gives an analysis of Patroclus’ activities, and deems the year 266/65 BC probable for Sotades’ execution: «C’est donc huit ou dix ans après le mariage, quatre ans après le décès d’Arsinoé, que Sotadès fut mis à mort. Il en résulte que, vraisemblablement, c’est une erreur de croire que Sotadès fut exécuté à cause de son ‘épithalame’».

81 Thus also P.M. Fraser, op. cit. (n. 4), I, p. 117. M. Launey, art. cit. (n. 65), p. 44f., discusses Arsinoe, Ptolemy and Patroclus as driving forces behind the execution, however, and quite justly the question is not answered conclusively; S.M. Burstein, art. cit. (n. 79), p. 211, assumes that the king’s fear of a negative public reaction could have been a motive for killing Sotades, accordingly it would have to be seen as preventive measure. There are no indicators for an oppositional movement, cf. P.M. Fraser, op. cit. I, p. 118.


Another version is given by Valerius Maximus: asking whether he would find his horse again, Daphidas, who did not possess a horse, wanted to put the oracle at Delphi to the test. The answer was that he would find it, but he would be thrown off and die. Shortly after that a king named Attalus ordered that he was to be cast off a rock called equus, this as reaction to attacks, which saepenumero... contumeliosis dictis were made from a safe distance. This is also the version of the Suda article, which sums it up as follows: ἦν δὲ οὗτος λοιδορούμενος παντὶ καὶ μέχρις αὐτῶν μὴ φειδόμενος τὸν θεοῦ. An apparent point of the distich is that it was aimed at Philetaerus, the founder of the Attalid dynasty and a eunuch himself, who together with the city of Pergamon and 9,000 talents of Lysimachus went over to Seleucus, thus a rather dishonourable line of descent. By connecting μόλωψ with the regal colour crimson the rule of the Attalids is under attack, the meaning of the final clause remains unclear. The decisive question, under which king Daphidas was killed, is not answered by these verses: the identification is possible with the first to the third bearer of the name Attalus. Fontenrose has put this episode into the context of the reign of Attalus III and identified Daphidas as supporter of Aristonicus, something that can hardly be proved. In the face of our knowledge about the affair, it is not possible, either, to back up his assessment: «we can hardly believe that either the first or second

84 V. Max. I 8, ext. 8 = Poseid. fr. 385f. Theiler. The name here is Daphnites, his profession is obliquely referred to as 'sophist'. D.C. Braund, art. cit. (n. 82), p. 355, presumes some local tradition for Strabo, whereas Valerius recurred to Poseidonius (cf. also Cic., de fato III 5). For parallels with regard to the ways they were killed cf. J. Fontenrose, art. cit. (n. 82), p. 97f.
85 Suda, s.v. Δαφίδας (II 10, A99, ed. Adler = SH 371), similarly Hesych. Miles., Onom. 14 (4.160 M). According to the Suda article Daphidas had called Homer a liar, since the Athenians had not taken part in the Trojan war.
88 U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, art. cit. (n. 82), p. 632 (Daphidas was allegedly a follower of the Seleucids under Attalus I); F. Susanh, art. cit. (n. 15), II, p. 22 n. 11: Attalus II or III; J. Fontenrose, art. cit. (n. 82), p. 85ff., followed by J. Hopp, op. cit. (n. 28): Attalus III; D.C. Braund, art. cit. (n. 82) considers all bearers of the name conceivable.
Attalus was the sort of ruler who would condemn a man to death by any method because he had made unkind remarks about the dynasty.” Of as little help is the decree of proxeny from Orchomenus in Boeotia, naming a certain Agedicus, son of Daphidas, of Alexandria in the Troad: the dates vary between the second half of the 3rd century and the first half of the 2nd century BC.

Thus, the precise circumstances of Daphidas’ death cannot be pinned down, just as little as his previous contacts to Pergamon. What seems important, however, is that Daphidas, who also turned against Homer, Delphi and the gods, not only attacked one of the Attalids with this distich (or even the dynasty as such), but also that he set forth further attacks, until the king had him captured and executed. However, from this instance we cannot come to any definite conclusions with regard to the limits of the king. Daphidas cannot be connected with an opposition movement against the Attalid rule.

VI

To conclude I would like to offer some more examples of violent deaths of intellectuals in chronological order. What all of them have in common is, that there cannot be traced a strong connection between critical statements and subsequent punishment.

It is certain that the philosopher Anaxarchus of Abdera took part in Alexander’s Anabasis and produced numerous Apophthegmata, which he sometimes employed to flatter Alexander, but in which he also played open jokes, which have recently been analysed impressively by Jacques Brunschwig. His παρρησία was accepted by Alexander, not, however,
by king Nicocreon of Salamis on Cyprus, who had him arrested after Alexander’s death, and put a heroically endured — and already in antiquity widely known — end to his life: «putting him in a mortar, he ordered him to be pounded to death with iron pestles»94. The hostility had its unknown cause in Alexander’s courtly entourage, making Anaxarchus ironically demand the head of the tyrant at a symposium at Tyrus in 331 BC95. The reason for his execution was accordingly not so much connected with the wording of his verbal attack, but rather with its exposing in front of Alexander.

There are reports from the court of Lysimachus that the strategos Telesphorus was mutilated and kept in a cage like a wild animal till he died, because he had mocked Arsinoé during a symposium by quoting a tragedian’s verse96. In addition to that, Athenaeus (XIV 616c) remarks


95 Athen. VI 250e, Plut., Alex. 28.4-6, De virt. mor. 10 (= Mor. 449e); Diog. Laert. IX 58f. For the pun, which has many associations, with κεφαλοὶ, a species of fish, and κεφαλαία, the satraps’ heads, cf. P. BERNARD, art. cit. (n. 93), p. 8ff. According to Athen. VIII 349 a Kitharist named Stratonicus of Axiostheon, the wife of Nicocreon, was killed (ἐν τῷ πελάγει διέλυσε τὴν παρρησίαν), however, this anecdote has also been handed down with regard to Nicocles of Paphus (Athen. 352c-d), see also P. MAAS, art. Stratonikos (2), RE IVA 1 (1931), col. 36f.; H. GESCHE, art. cit. (n. 94), p. 104; P. BERNARD, art. cit. (n. 93), p. 6. For the adoption of the event on a Kontorniat medaillion of the year AD 360 cf. A. ALFÖLDI, art. cit. (n. 5), p. 15f.

96 So Plut., De exil. 16 (= Mor. 606b); Athen. XIV 616c; Sen., De ira III 17 (with many embellishments of the whole scenario, cf. R. MALCHOW, op. cit. [n. 57], p. 488f.); the respective verse is quoted in Plut., Quaest. Conv. II 1 (= Mor. 634e), spoken by a certain Timagenes; cf. H.S. LUND, op. cit. (n. 21), p. 10ff.; F. LANDUCCI GATTINONI, Lissimaci di Tracia. Un sovrano nella prospettiva del primo ellenismo, Mailand 1992, p. 39f.; C. FRANCO, Il regno di Lisimaco. Strutture amministrative e rapporti con le città (Studi ellenistici, 6), Pisa 1993, p. 188 and 262f.; incorrectly W. VOLCKER-JANSEN, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 84, according to whom Telesphorus had been torn to pieces by wild animals. Telesphorus’ fate was used as a reminder for the philosopher and Ptolemaic ambassador Theodorus, cf. n. 110. Telesphorus had apparently served Antigonus I previously, cf. H. BERVE, art. Telesphoros (2), RE VA 1 (1934), col. 390; more reticently D. POTTER, Telesphoros, Cousin of Demetrius. A Note on the Trial of Menander, Historia 36 (1987), p. 491-495; T. KRUSE, Zwei Denkmäler der Antigoniden in Olympia. Eine Untersuchung zu Pausanias 6, 16.3, MDAI(A) 107 (1992), p. 273-293, here 283 with n. 23.
that Lysimachus had also been infuriated by mockery on other occasions, then, however, he had reacted differently; perhaps his reaction towards Telesphorus should make an example, but possibly it might be more likely that it results from some hack’s insult97.

A slightly different example is the Athenian politician and peripatetic philosopher Demetrius of Phaleron, who, after his flight from Athens (in 298/97 BC), played the central role at the Ptolemaic court, not only as intellectual but also as political advisor98. Following the death of his patron Ptolemy I he fell out of favour with his successor, since he had at first supported the elder half-brother Ptolemy Keraunos. This provides us with evidence that any literary achievement becomes irrelevant, or also that existing φιλία-relations are discontinued, if vital interests of the ruler concerned were threatened. Public literary agitation was not a good precondition for that.

About Philochorus, the last great writer of an Atthis, we read in the Suda article that Antigonus Gonatas had him killed (probably in 261/60 BC), because he had favoured the 2nd Ptolemy99. From the numerous preserved fragments it is, however, not possible to establish any connection between written agitation and his execution. The causes are more likely to be found in the context of the Chremonidean War, among the instigators of which Philochorus is generally counted by scholars. It is most unlikely that he ever spent some time at the Antigonid court100.

Furthermore, we know about some Samus or Samius, the son of a certain Chrysogonus and σύντροφος of Philip V101. Polybius (V 9.4f.)
G. WEBER points out his early discernible poetic talent and gives a verse that had been a standard quotation after the first destruction of Thermus in 218 BC, which had been regarded as revenge for the Actolians’ heinous deed in Dion: \(\delta\rho\alpha\varsigma\,\tau\omicron\ \delta\iota\omicron\ \omicron\ \omicron\ \beta\epsilon\\lambda\omicron\varsigma\ \delta\iota\epsilon\pi\tau\alpha\tau\omicron\), which was a parody of Euripides (Suppl. 860). Shortly before 182 BC Philip had him executed together with his family and further prominent members of the court society, in the context of inner-Macedonian unrest. One of his epigrams, in which Philip dedicated a hunting trophy to Heracles, has come down to us in the Anthology; possibly two further epigrams were written by him, as well, one of which with another reference to Heracles, the other compares Philip and Zeus. We do not know of what kind the discrepancies between Philip and his σύντροφος had been, in any case, a connection between his murder and his poetry seems unlikely. In this context his contemporary Alcaeus of Messenia also has to be mentioned: Frank Walbank has accurately brought out his change from an ardent admirer of Philip to an embittered enemy, and referred to the custom, which has already been quoted twice, to call the ruler \(\Kappa\upsilon\kappa\lambda\omicron\omicron\psi\). There do not exist reports about his death, nor that Philip tried to get hold of him.

Finally, Athenaeus records a Seleucid example: the Epicurean Diogenes was executed under Antiochus VI (after 145 BC). Diogenes was under Antiochus’ predecessor and father Alexander Balas renowned for his disrespectful jests, which also included the person of the king, and which Antiochus allegedly was unwilling to tolerate any longer. The

102 Cf. Polyb. XXIII 10.9; see also F.W. WALBANK, op. cit. (n. 101), p. 244f. and 335; K.-W. WELWEI, Könige und Königum im Urteil des Polybios, Diss. Cologne 1963, p. 50ff. Plut., Quomodo adulatur ab amico internoscatur 9 (= Mor. 53e) counts Samius and Philip among the examples of an unpleasant ending of a friendship because of criticism and suspicion.


account is, of course, in so far problematic as Antiochus was probably aged two at the time. Thus, it is more likely that political reasons of his promoter and then murderer Diodotus Tryphon were decisive factors.\footnote{Athen. 211a-d; cf. H. VON ARNIM, art. Diogenes aus Seleukeia am Tigris (47), RE V 1 (1903), col. 777; inaccurately W. VÖLCKER-JANSSSEN, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 84, who sees the speeches of Diogenes as cause of the execution. For Antiochus VI cf. U. WILCKEN, art. Antiochos (29), RE I 2 (1894), col. 2477f. Moreover, Diod. XXXIII 28 (= Poseid. fr. 123 Theiler, with comments).}

VII

I would like to end the series of examples here, and give a short summary. The analysis of the three cases that have been examined did at least yield a number of clues that might complete our idea of communicational and interactive structures at court, as well as with regard to the perception from outside the court. What the cases have in common is that each of the poets was allegedly executed because of statements directed against a ruler or a dynasty.

The reason why the rule of Hellenistic kings appears in many cases as tyranny is mainly due to its structural weaknesses. This is also expressed in the fragile structure of the court society which had to be integrated anew time and again.\footnote{Further weak points are, for example, the pressure to be successful, the question of succession, external threats, the economic situation, for this cf. M.M. AUSTIN, Hellenistic Kings, War, and the Economy, CQ 36 (1986), p. 450-466.} It was almost an everyday occurrence that not only claimants to the throne from one’s own family were executed, but also other members of the court and irritating subjects. Positive exceptions were already recorded in ancient sources, and this is also confirmed by the image of the ideal king, which is outlined in the treatises περι βασιλείας, and by the self-portrayal in inscriptions and προστάγματα: with regard to our context a king was to be δίκαιος, φιλάνθρωπος and ἔπειτα, as is, for example, repeatedly emphasized in the Aristeas letter from the 2nd century BC.\footnote{See F.W. WALBANK, The Hellenistic Picture of the King, in: CAH² VII 1, Cambridge 1984, p. 75-84; cf. already E.R. GOODENOUGH, The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship, YCS 1 (1928), p. 55-102; W. SCHUBART, Das hellenistische Königsideal nach Inschriften und Papyri, AFP 12 (1937), p. 1-26; W. SCHUBART, Das Königsbild des Hellenismus, Die Antike 13 (1937), p. 272-288; O. MURRAY, Aristeas and Ptolemaic Kingship, JThS 18 (1967), p. 336-371; T. ADAM, op. cit. (n. 58), p. 12ff.; P. HADOT, art. Fürstenspiegel, RAC 8 (1972), col. 555-632, here 586ff. Graphically on this Polyb. IV 77.2f.; VIII 10.8ff.; XVIII 41 (cf. H. SONNABEND, art. cit. [n. 82]); Suda, s.v. βασιλεία.
ized image demonstrates that each protagonist should have been familiar with the problem: whoever became part of the court society or came into contact with the ruler in some other way was aware of the tremendous opportunities for promotion. On the other hand, however, one was also aware of the risk, to come into conflict with the ruler, maybe even by accident, or to become the plaything of different interest groups. Still, the deterring effect of examples showing the negative outcome of a relationship between ruler and *polis* Greeks, and these were by no means scarce in number, does not seem to have been too momentous: the attractiveness of the courts was just too great.

Nonetheless, there were singular individuals, who were consciously opposed to the ruler, and who also articulated this. In general the ruler’s tolerance was extremely great according to the ‘mirrors for princes’ (*Fürstenspiegel*). There were no strict rules or uniform consequences, and neither does an understanding of all members of the court society as servants or subordinates give an adequate idea of the basic communicative situation. For the scrutiny of our sources shows that rulers could also react quite generously to poetic libelling, as is proven by various examples in Plutarch.

In the case of suspected or actual threats the rulers did not show any consideration for the status or previous achievements of a poet, and in his own territory he made full use of his monopoly on the use of force. Naturally, irrational actions, especially under the influence of alcohol in the context of a symposium, could never be ruled out. When, however, Theocritus picked out Antigonus’ resemblance to a Cyclops as a theme, Sotades the sibling marriage among the Ptolemies, and Daphidas the dishonourable descent of the Attalids, then they touched both on a precari-
ous political situation and they came into conflict with the ruler's personal sensitivity. The reason why the three literati were executed, must, however, have been more than their criticism in the form of just some verses or a saying. They were especially known as notorious grousers: sometimes, however, they pushed their luck too far. As mavericks they can hardly be described as mouthpiece of a broader Greek opposition, which is also the case for other intellectuals. However, they were able to cause a good deal of unrest in the frail structure of the court society, the exact state of which we cannot determine.

Their agitation has to be explained in the tradition of antiquated thought categories of the polis and it has to be understood also as a sign of powerlessness. In this context one has to mention that we are neither in a position to answer the highly important question about effects and publicity of such events in the conflicting area of orality and literacy, nor do we know the contents, the ridicule of which might have been unpleasant for a ruler, especially with regard to his subjects and other kings. Perhaps it was also due to the increasing degree of literacy in Hellenism, especially within its elite, that exiling was no longer sufficient, as it had been, according to Moses Finley (in TLS 1977), in societies that were characterized by their orality. Moreover, with regard to the communicative situation, there was not much point in exiling a poet, for


113 What seems remarkable to me is that we do not know about similar cases in the fields of fine arts or handicraft, as for instance comparable to modern caricatures. This may be due to the fact that, on the one hand, visual agitation is far more difficult to accomplish than literary agitation, and on the other, ancient tradition might not have had the same degree of interest in them.

114 Explicitly negative in M.I. Finley, art. cit. (n. 12), p. 924: «Books and pamphlets played no part of any consequence in affecting or moulding public opinion, even in elite circles». Moreover, contemporary society had been determined much more by orality than by literacy. The question concerning the shaping of public opinion and forms of censorships, have, as far as I can see, not yet been answered specifically for Hellenism.

example, from the Ptolemaic empire, if he was able to continue his agita-
tation from another court.

Reports about the different ways the poets were killed hint at the pos-
sibility that the rulers might have tried to make events seem better, 
because of the negative reputation of tyrannical measures. On the other 
hand this could also have been influenced by a moralizing public for agi-
tative reasons. We are, however, not in a position to decide this for each 
of the cases. At any rate, in order to be successful, courtly communica-
tion and regal representation demanded a great amount of fine feeling 
from all parties involved.

D–85072 Eichstätt
Ostenstraße 26

Gregor Weber
Ostenstraße 26