

CHAPTER ELEVEN

POET AND COURT

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ABSTRACT

Beginning from an overview of Hellenistic monarchy this contribution turns first to Ptolemy I and his need for a royal court to establish himself in Egypt. Intellectuals in a variety of areas at the Ptolemaic court contributed in a major way to this development, intellectuals who were also in large part also friends of the King. We should understand Callimachus and his work in this context: the court with its personalities and events gave him material for poetic creation, and ensured its reception. The variety of his work can be understood as a reflection of the character of the court as political, administrative, intellectual, and social center—for Callimachus and his fellow poets were informed by the court's structures of communication and interaction. These structures also make it possible for us to consider the contexts of publication and performance, as well as audience.

When Alexander the Great died in July 323 BC, not only had he failed to settle his succession, but it was also an open question how the Greek world would develop in the newly conquered regions of his vast empire.¹ At first Alexander's closest confidants split the satrapies up among themselves and governed them on behalf of Alexander's son (also named Alexander) and feeble-minded half brother, Philip III Arrhidaeus, but soon enough there was a state of constant warfare among the Successors. In this series of conflicts, all the other combatants would invariably combine against the one who appeared to be the strongest at the time, resulting in a constant reduction in the number

Throughout this chapter, volume 6 of W. Peremans, *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* (Louvain, 1968), will be abbreviated as *PP VI*. I thank Benjamin Acosta-Hughes for the invitation to contribute to this volume, which I gladly undertook, especially because of the memory of our time studying together in Freiburg. I thank also Jürgen Malitz and Susan Stephens for several important suggestions. Christopher Schliephake helped with bibliography and proofreading.

¹ Possible options: Weber 2007a: 256–258.

of contestants.² After Alexander's son and sister died, a new state of affairs emerged, in that each of the main players one after another proclaimed himself king, or rather was so acclaimed by his troops.³ This step was to prove rich in consequences, since kings like Lysimachus, Seleucus, Antigonus, and Ptolemy were now faced with a difficult task: they had to present themselves in the lands they occupied as legitimate rulers and win acceptance among the various peoples, or else establish robust structures for their rule, since they were each still exposed to the attacks of their competitors. As different as their relationships with their kingdoms appeared in detail, all the new Hellenistic monarchs were faced with a similar situation. What was crucial in the establishment of Hellenistic monarchies is encapsulated in the entry *Βασιλεία* in the *Suda*, a Byzantine lexicon of the tenth century AD: οὔτε φύσις οὔτε τὸ δίκαιον ἀποδιδούσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰς βασιλείας, ἀλλὰ τοῖς δυναμένοις ἡγεῖσθαι στρατοπέδου καὶ χειρίζειν πράγματα νουνεχῶς.⁴ The Hellenistic king had first of all to be a successful military general,⁵ a king could manage his so-called *πράγματα* only if he had reliable helpers beneath him, had set up an administrative and political center, and could deploy adequate financial resources, which he had to draw from his own territory. These were essential to pay for troops, mostly mercenaries, as well as for a residence that could be the foundation for satisfactory royal self-fashioning—for a king required a whole infrastructure compartmentalized in accordance with his needs, with rooms for audiences, feasts, and symposia, as well as storerooms and living quarters.⁶ Besides all this, he had to keep an eye on his acceptance as a Graeco-Macedonian king (*βασιλεύς*) and deport himself, whether through military aid, foundations, financial expenditure, or other acts of generosity, as Savior (*Σωτήρ*) and Benefactor (*Εὐεργέτης*) before the Greek public. Hellenistic monarchy, therefore, entailed personal rule and centered on the king's affairs (*τὰ πράγματα*) and on his household (*οἶκος*; Virgilio 1994: 163–164).

² This phase lasted, with shifting coalitions, for a good fifty years, till 272 BC; see further Braund 2003; Bosworth 2006; Malitz 2007: 23–36.

³ On the Year of the Kings ((306/5 BC), see Plut. *Demetr.* 18 and P. Köln 6.247 with O. Müller 1973; Gehrke 2003: 39 and 167–168; M.M. Austin 2006: no. 44.

⁴ Translation in M.M. Austin 2006: no. 45: "Monarchy. It is neither descent nor legitimacy which gives monarchies to men, but the ability to command an army and to handle affairs competently." See further on this Gehrke 2003: 46–49.

⁵ See the title of Gehrke 1982.

⁶ The evidence is reviewed by Nielsen 1999, though often with excessively confident identifications; see Vössing 2004: 100–106.

The development of a court soon came to be seen as an indispensable ingredient in the organization of a kingdom; moreover, as an expanded version of the royal household it represented the spatial center that the king inhabited.⁷ From here he administered the fate of his sovereign territory, and here, in festivals and other performances, he put his kingdom on show.⁸ Above all, though, the king surrounded himself with people who helped him cope with his various duties, on whom he could rely, and in whose company he appeared on many different occasions: these were the king's Companions (φίλοι), who, along with the royal family, the royal servants, and individuals residing on a temporary basis at the court (ambassadors, for instance), made up court society. Among these Companions the king also convened the royal council (συνέδριον), and made public displays of communality at feasts (συνουσίαι) and drinking parties (συμπόσια).⁹ It goes almost without saying that such gatherings were a locus of conflicts, since within the court circle (which was in no sense hermetically sealed to outsiders) there was fierce competition for royal favor.¹⁰ The king in his turn had to fulfill expectations, and thus minimize potential threats, through donations of land and money, the distribution of prestigious priesthoods, or the dedication of statues (Habicht 1958: 4, 10–12; Seibert 1991). Even members of the royal family could represent a source of anxiety, since the existence of pretenders to the throne born from different marriages could lead to friction in the absence of clear rules of succession. (Ogden 1999 is fundamental here.) How the new elite

⁷ On what follows: Weber 1993: 20–32; Herman 1997; Weber 1997; Winterling 1998: 661–662. It is illuminating that the phrases τὸ βασίλειον or τὰ βασίλεια, which at first meant only “the royal” and required an explanatory noun, came to limit a specific space belonging to the king. At the same time the word ἀλή (“court”), which seems to have emerged first in the context of Hellenistic courts, had similar spatial connotations while also containing within its field of meaning the idea of court society (Funck 1996: 52). The royal court in Pella had already been specially constructed, even though the norm under Alexander, if we disregard the final stage of his expedition in Babylon, was really a traveling court. The nature of the court as a military camp, imposed by the necessities of war, meant that the royal tent (σκηνή)—equipped with everything that was required for organization and representation—became a visual and symbolic center.

⁸ See on this Weber 2007c: 102–111. Luxury (τροφή) would become one of the characteristic features of the Hellenistic monarchs in comparison with the Roman *nobiles*; see on this Heinen 1983.

⁹ On the forms of court life, see Weber 1997: 43–46; Asper 2004: 7–9; Strootman 2005b: 191–92. On the symposium and the rich tradition of anecdotes associated with it, see Vössing 2004: 86–92.

¹⁰ On the competition, see Polybius 4.874–85 with Herman 1997: 210–211; Meissner 2000: 9–10 nn. 27, 28.

was made up—what regions and social classes the king's Companions came from, what functions they had been installed to fulfill, and whether members of the former native upper class were represented—was consequently of great concern to every royal court.¹¹

If we look more closely at the actions of Ptolemy I in the light of these considerations, peculiarities emerge. Ptolemy was the son of a Macedonian named Lagus, and as a member of Alexander's bodyguard was a member of his closest circle of friends (σωματοφύλακες). In the apportioning of the satrapies in the wake of Alexander's death, he secured Egypt and not only defended his sovereign territory but was also able to extend it to include Cyrene, part of Asia Minor, and a number of the Aegean islands.¹² Problems within the family, which resulted from passing over the older Ptolemy Ceraunus (Lightning Bolt), the king's son by Eurydice, in favor of a younger Ptolemy who was the result of the king's marriage to Berenice, were not replicated in subsequent dynastic history (Malitz 2007: 34–37). Ptolemy I had come upon considerable financial resources in Egypt, which he invested shrewdly in various projects.¹³ One initiative concentrated on recruiting mercenaries and putting the defense of Egypt on an effective footing. He also endeavored to win the good will of the Egyptian priestly elite from the beginning through donations and funds for repair work to sanctuaries.¹⁴ Connected to this courting of the priestly class is another peculiarity of the Ptolemaic regime in Egypt, the “dual-faced” nature of the monarchy, in which Ptolemy was both *basileus* and pharaoh.¹⁵ Ptolemy had next to strive to get as many Greeks and Macedonians as possible as settlers, traders, and so forth, and as many experts in a

¹¹ The pattern of interaction between the king and these various circles of acquaintances did not remain constant throughout the Hellenistic period but went through several different phases, on which see Weber 2007c: 114–116. On the equality of relations between βασιλεύς and φίλοι, at least at the beginning of the period, see Weber 1997: 42–43; *contra*, Meissner 2000. On the type of the flatterer (κόλαξ), who is often mentioned in accounts of the court as viewed from outside, see Kerkhecker 1997: 130–132; Vössing 2004: 93–100.

¹² Hölbl 1994: 14–31; Huss 2001: 97–212. In comparison with the other Successors, Ptolemy confined himself from the beginning to Egypt and made no claims on Alexander's empire as a whole.

¹³ According to Diod. 18.14.1 these consisted of 8,000 talents, which Cleomenes of Naucratis had accumulated there as his predecessor (Legras 2006). Similar sums were available to the founders of the Attalid dynasty.

¹⁴ Cooperation seemed a good idea to both sides; for the range of measures, see Huss 1994.

¹⁵ For this the term *monarchie bicéphale* has been introduced; see Peremans 1987.

variety of areas: for example, agricultural science, finance, and so on. To them, he was their βασιλεύς and had to fulfill their expectations. At the same time he fulfilled the role of pharaoh for the indigenous Egyptians, since in Egyptian theology such a figure was indispensable for the preservation of the natural order.¹⁶ Subsequent Ptolemaic rulers also submitted themselves to this requirement, though their behavior vis-à-vis Egyptian culture and the Egyptian elite changed somewhat over time. Finally, Ptolemy must have hurried along the construction of Alexandria as his capital and royal city (while residing until 311 at the latest in Memphis), although separate phases of construction can hardly be discerned there any longer. Because of this, Strabo's detailed description of Alexandria is of some importance:¹⁷

ἔχει δ' ἡ πόλις τεμένη τε κοινὰ κάλλιστα καὶ τὰ βασίλεια, τέταρτον ἢ καὶ τρίτον τοῦ παντὸς περιβόλου μέρος· τῶν γὰρ βασιλείων ἕκαστος ὡσπερ τοῖς κοινοῖς ἀναθήμασι προσεφιλοκάλει τινὰ κόσμον, οὕτω καὶ οἰκησιν ἰδίᾳ περιεβάλλετο πρὸς ταῖς ὑπαρχούσαις... τῶν δὲ βασιλείων μέρος ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ Μουσεῖον, ἔχον περίπατον καὶ ἐξέδραν καὶ οἶκον μέγαν ἐν ᾧ τὸ συσσίτιον τῶν μετεχόντων τοῦ Μουσείου φιλολόγων ἀνδρῶν. ἐστὶ δὲ τῇ συνόδῳ ταύτῃ καὶ χρήματα κοινὰ καὶ ἱερεὺς ὁ ἐπὶ τῷ Μουσεῖῳ τεταγμένος τότε μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν βασιλείων νῦν δ' ὑπὸ Καίσαρος. μέρος δὲ τῶν βασιλείων ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ καλούμενον Σῆμα, ὃ περίβολος ἦν ἐν ᾧ αἱ τῶν βασιλείων ταφαὶ καὶ ἡ Ἀλεξάνδρου· ἔφθη γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἀφελόμενος Περδίκκαν ὁ τοῦ Λάγῳ Πτολεμαῖος κατακομίζοντα ἐκ τῆς Βαβυλῶνος.

The city has magnificent public precincts and the royal palaces, which cover a fourth or even a third of the entire city area. For just as each of the kings would from a love of splendor add some ornament to the public monuments, so he would provide himself at his own expense with a residence in addition to those already standing... The Museum also forms part of the royal palaces; it has a covered walk, an arcade with recesses and seats, and a large house, in which is the dining hall of the learned members of the Museum. This association of men shares common property and has a priest of the Muses, who used to be appointed by the kings but is now appointed by Caesar. The so-called Tomb is also part of the royal palaces; this was an enclosure in which were the tombs of the kings and of Alexander. For Ptolemy son of Lagus got in ahead of Perdiccas and took the body from him when he was bringing it down from Babylon.

¹⁶ On the ideology of the Graeco-Macedonian monarchy: Gehrke 1982; M.M. Austin 1986; Virgilio 2003; Ma 2003. On Egyptian ideas: Koenen 1993; Schloz 1994; Stephens 2003: 20–73; Blöbaum 2006: 277–280; Edelmannon 2007: 22–26.

¹⁷ Strabo 17.1.8 with M.M. Austin 2006: no. 292; Weber 2007c: 99–103. On the palace: Nielsen 1999: 131–138 with no. 20.

The geographer's final remark refers to a remarkable coup on the part of Ptolemy: by taking Alexander's corpse into his possession and keeping it close to him, so to speak, by burying it at first at Memphis and then later in Alexandria, he proved himself a legitimate Successor.¹⁸ Of lasting importance is the erection of the Museum, which also included a library. Demetrius of Phalerum, who had come from Athens to Alexandria in exile, may have had a part in the initiative for the founding of this institution.¹⁹ Ptolemy, who had himself written about Alexander's campaigns,²⁰ doubtless reinforced a previous tendency toward Aristotelian scientific learning, while now under royal patronage a real research institute was established, the like of which was not to be found anywhere else in the Greek world.²¹ Ptolemy II continued his father's initiatives, so that it is sometimes unclear which measures go back to which Ptolemy. The kings spared no expense and tried to bring the best scholars in all fields of knowledge to Alexandria; these scholars could pursue research in their areas of inquiry undisturbed, in the best working conditions. The consequences were threefold. First, new foundations were laid in many intellectual disciplines. Second, the most prominent scholars served as guardians of Greek culture and powerfully reiterated its significance. Third, and most important, they increased by their activities the prestige and reputation (κλέος) of the Ptolemaic kings in the Greek world.²² Lasting advances were made under the Ptolemies, for example in medicine and anatomy (with human vivisection), astronomy (with an observatory), engineering (with innovative equipment), and biology (with a zoological garden).²³ Above all, every book that could possibly be possessed was bought—or

¹⁸ Besides Diod. 18.28.2, Curt. 10.10.20 with Schlange-Schöninghen 1996. The cult of the deified Ptolemies followed almost immediately after the cult of the dead Alexander, starting with Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his biological sister, Arsinoe II, as Θεοὶ Ἀδελφοί (Huss 2001: 325–327).

¹⁹ *PP VI* 16104 with Weber 1993: 77–78; Erskine 1995: 40. In the opinion of Bagnall 2002: 349–351, the relationship between the Museum and the Library is far from clear. There are discussions of the topography in Rodziewicz 1995 and McKenzie 2007.

²⁰ *PP VI* 16942: *FGrHist* 138 with Ellis 1994: 17–22; Ameling 2001: 533.

²¹ Fraser 1972: 1.305–35; Weber 1993: 82–86; Asper 2004: 12. On the patronage of intellectuals by monarchs, which was already not unusual in archaic and classical times, see Weber 1992. On Alexander's example, see Weber 2007a: 240–241, 252–253.

²² On the competitive aspect: Weber 1995 and 1997: 27–29, 45–46.

²³ For a comprehensive treatment, see Weber 1993: 84–85; Huss 2001: 317–319; Scholz 2007: 162–167.

stolen—for the Library.²⁴ In order to receive proper treatment by philologists, its contents, which under Ptolemy II must have encompassed a good two hundred thousand papyrus rolls, had first to be catalogued (Ps.-Aristeas 10; Vössing 1997: 641). This achievement is inseparably connected with the name of Callimachus, who produced a comprehensive catalogue of authors (with biographies) and works in 120 books.²⁵ Callimachus was never chief librarian but between the 280s and the 240s BC he was among the most influential intellectuals of the Ptolemaic royal court.²⁶ This status brings us back to the question of the composition of court society: that is, of the actual surroundings in which Callimachus found himself and produced both his multifaceted scholarly work and also his poetry.

In the context of continuing military challenges, especially in periods of intensive conflict with the Seleucids and Antigonids,²⁷ Ptolemy reached out in the first instance (and in accordance with his personal judgment and current requirements) to people who were part of his own entourage at the time, who came from Macedonia but also from the Greek city-states (πόλεις) and tribes (ἔθνη). (For an overview, see Strootman 2005b: 187–188.) Selection mechanisms presumably included personal acquaintance through previous work on the general staff and references from other people; also conceivable are self-introductions by adventurers and individuals who had been exiled from their πόλεις.²⁸ Military, administrative, and diplomatic capabilities seem to have been among the prerequisites necessary for

²⁴ Erskine 1995: 39–40. The goal was to collect Greek texts and also the most important books in foreign languages (Ps.-Aristeas 9–10; Athen. 1.3a; Plin. *NH* 30.4; with Vössing 1997: 641–642); on Egyptian books, see Legras 2002: 987–988; on the significance of Houses of Life for Egyptian literature, see Legras 2001: 130–140.

²⁵ The full title runs: Πίνακες τῶν ἐν πάσῃ παιδείᾳ διαλαμπάντων καὶ ὄν συνέγραψαν. The attestations: fr. 429–453 Pf. and *SH* 292–293 with Erskine 1995: 45; Asper 2004: 12–13, 49–50. Admittedly, whether or not the Πίνακες were identical with the Library catalogue is still a controversial question. See Bagnall 2002 and Krevans, this volume.

²⁶ On the construction of the chronological framework, see Asper 2004: 3–5. On the list of chief librarians (POxy 10.1241): Weber 1993: 83; Vössing 1997: 641. I leave to one side the question of whether Callimachus actually came to court as a royal page, as the νεανίσκος τῆς αὐλῆς in Tzetzes (*CGF* p. 31 Kaibel) suggests (Alan Cameron 1995: 3–5; Asper 2004: 5).

²⁷ On the period of the first three Ptolemies, see Hölbl 1994: 36–42, 46–53.

²⁸ At times we are confronted by considerable methodological problems, since—especially at the beginning of the Hellenistic period—the status of a φίλος is often not explicitly remarked upon (Weber 1993: 133 n. 5).

qualification for the core group of intimates.²⁹ Remarkably, prestige in literature, science, and art also played an important role, as references to the most prominent scholars in individual disciplines make clear. We know of several mathematicians, astronomers, philosophers, historians, and geographers from this period.³⁰ Along with other intellectuals, the chief librarian often performed the duties of tutor to the king's children, and well-known examples of royal tutors are Philetas of Cos, Strato of Lampsacus, and Zenodotus of Ephesus.³¹ Such men had a special relationship of trust with the king. Their appointment also demonstrated the significance of the Greek education (*παιδεία*) they transmitted. A few scholars were multitalented and active in several branches of learning at the same time; above all, though, they dedicated themselves to poetry.

A developed aristocracy—that is to say, a nobility of birth who owned a part of the land and also lived there—was not a feature of the beginning of the Ptolemaic era in Egypt. Instead we have a new, artificially created elite, which like the king was a foreign imposition on a conquered land, and which was based mostly at court—that is to say, in the capital city.³² And this would essentially remain the case under later Ptolemaic rulers. We know the names of several people with broad official remits from the over thirty-year reign of Ptolemy II, although the mass of individual attestations does not permit us to put together concrete groups that would have attended court at particular times.³³ The royal family itself is well documented, and apart from that we know the names of a few royal mistresses (*ἐρώμενα*), such as Bilistiche.³⁴ Among those explicitly called *φίλοι* are Dionysius of Lampsacus and his son Apollodorus, the Athenian politician Glaucon,

²⁹ On the especially important military, in which there were a few Macedonians, see Weber 1993: 133–135.

³⁰ See Weber 1993: 136–137 with the documents and numbers from *PP VI*.

³¹ Philetas: *PP VI* 16724; Strato: *PP VI* 14656; Zenodotus: *PP VI* 14648; others: Meissner 1992: 493–497; Weber 1993: 74–75 with nn. 3 and 4, as well as 134, 418; Hose 1997: 51–52. On Philip and Alexander as exempla, see Weber 2007a: 240 n. 57.

³² It is not possible to describe living arrangements at court any more precisely, but in view of the levels of competition already mentioned, continual efforts at greater proximity to the king among the *φίλοι* can safely be assumed.

³³ Many of the people with military experience were not permanently at court but were brought in according to need: Weber 1993: 138–148.

³⁴ On her and other women, see Weber 1993: 138–139 with n. 3. Chronological certainty is difficult, although it seems reasonably certain that Ptolemy II did not marry again after the death of his sister-wife, Arsinoe II, on 9 July 270 BC: see Weber 1993: 138–148.

the nauarch Callicrates of Samos, Pelops of Macedonia, and Sostratus of Cnidus. (For all these people, see Weber 1993: 138–148.) The finance minister (διοικητής) Apollonius is not explicitly referred to as a φίλος, although his closeness to the king is not in doubt.³⁵ The number of intellectuals with verifiable links to the court shows a remarkable increase under Ptolemy, including the medicals Erasistratus of Ceos and Herophilus of Chalcedon, the mathematicians Archimedes of Syracuse and Conon of Samos, a few philosophers, grammarians, and geographers, but above all the poetic colleagues of Callimachus: Alexander Aetolus, Apollonius Rhodius, Asclepiades of Samos, Lycophron of Chalcis, Philicus of Corcyra, and Posidippus of Pella.³⁶ While for some of these figures a definite position in the Library is attested, for others all we have to go on are fragments of their works. It is, moreover, unclear whether Herodas of Cos, Theocritus of Syracuse, or even Sotades of Maronea really belonged to the inner court circle (Weber 1998–1999: 162–165). The well-known remark from the *Silloi* of Timon of Phlius about bookworms quarreling in the birdcages of the Muses in any case makes clear that arguments and competition—and surely not just over literature—were the order of the day.³⁷

A comparable list could be compiled for the court under Ptolemy III (Weber 1993: 149–154). Besides family members it was especially Sosibius of Alexandria, Hippomedon of Sparta, Dositheus, and Antiochus who were trusted by the king with important tasks. In the circle of intellectuals the figure of Eratosthenes was outstanding, who had not only the titles of chief librarian and royal tutor to his name but also some impressive achievements in geography.³⁸ Also involved were numerous other doctors such as Philip and Xenophantus, historians such as Demetrius of Byzantium or Satyrus of Callatis, astronomers like Dositheus of Pelusium, and the epigrammatist Dioscorides. In

³⁵ His activity is well known through the archive of his steward Zeno. (Apollonius owned an enormous δωρεά in the Fayum: Weber 1993: 143–144 with n. 3.) In his case we can even make out a smaller, personal court (Swiderek 1959–1960); also of interest in this connection is the fact that Zeno ordered two funerary epigrams for his deceased hunting dog Tauron, presumably in Alexandria (*SH* 977; Weber 1993: 153–154, 294–295; Parsons 2002: 103–104).

³⁶ For a summarized biography, see Weber 1993: 420–426, where a stay at the court in Alexandria is inferred for several poets from their work.

³⁷ *SH* 786 with Weber 1993: 87–95; Alan Cameron 1995: 31–33; Di Marco 2002: 592–593; Asper 2004: 11; see Stephens 2005 for references to the other side of the debate.

³⁸ *PP* VI 14645 = 16515, besides Weber 1993: 427; see also Geus 2002: 26–30, according to whom Eratosthenes did not belong to the φίλοι.

addition, we often have to take the presence of artists and architects of various types in court society into account (Weber 1993: 137–138 n. 5, 148 n. 1, 152 n. 1; von Hesberg 1981: 112; S. Schmidt 2004), although here explicit named attestations (as in the case of Ctesibius) seldom crop up.³⁹

Now, there are a few people who for several reasons stand out in court society. First of all, there are those whose especially close ties to the king are immediately plain: Callicrates, Glaucon,⁴⁰ Medeius, Pelops, and his brother Taurinus, as well as Sosibius and Dositheus, all fulfilled the functions of the eponymous priests of Alexander and of the Θεοὶ Ἀδελφοί, while Bilistiche was known to have held the office of the κωνηφόρος (processional bearer of the sacred basket) of Arsinoe.⁴¹ These offices brought with them an extraordinary level of prestige; bestowing recognition and honor on the individual selected, they simultaneously demonstrated his loyalty to the state (Hauben 1989; Weber 1993: 140–143). Further, a few individuals from this circle were remarkable for their dedication of enormous monuments: this is true of Sostratus, who built the hundred-meter-high Lighthouse (Φάρος) of Alexandria,⁴² as well as of Callicrates, who founded for the royal couple a temple complex of Isis and Anubis (as well as a separate temple in honor of Arsinoe in the aspect of Aphrodite Euploea) in Canopus, near Alexandria.⁴³ For another thing, not a few members of Ptolemaic courtly society received mentions in the poetry produced by figures linked to the court. But we know as a rule very little else about the circumstances of the time, so that it is impossible to say whether we are dealing with poetry written to order or whether it was a custom of the court to celebrate certain people beyond the king and his family in

³⁹ *PP* VI 16546 with von Hesberg 1987; Weber 1993: 144 n. 6.

⁴⁰ *PP* VI 14596 with Weber 1993: 139 n. 7. Glaucon was honored by Ptolemy III with a statue in Olympia (*Syll.*³ I 462; *SEG* 32.415, 33.406; with Crisculo 2003: 320–322).

⁴¹ PCairZen 2.59289, so Clarysse and van der Veken 1983: no. 40 = *PP* VI 14717 and IX 5066.

⁴² *PP* VI 14632 with Weber 1993: 140 n. 3. Pliny *NH* 36.18 seems certain that Sostratus was the architect, whereas the Ptolemaic rulers supplied the funds for the monument and dedicated it; but the whole issue is still mired in controversy; see Weber 2007c: 115. According to Bing 1998 only the statue of Zeus that crowns the Lighthouse is by Sostratus. Sostratus did dedicate a statue of Ptolemy II in Delphi: see Kotsidu 2000: 146.

⁴³ *PP* VI 14607 with Weber 1993: 139 n. 8; Kerkhecker 1997: 134. Besides this, Callicrates dedicated statues of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II in Olympia (Bing 2002–2003: 252–253).

poetry. In any case, the court with its goings-on and its cast of people represented a veritable reservoir of material for poets.⁴⁴ Because of the system of patronage, it is not surprising that the reigning king, his wife, and other members of his family were featured in poems of the most diverse genres. Sometimes praise occurred in a perfectly direct way, though often discretion was preferred, especially in Callimachus and in contrast to Theocritus, for example.⁴⁵ This also applies to the aforementioned Bilistiche, to whose Olympic victory there may be a cryptic allusion in an epigram attributed to Asclepiades (35 GP).⁴⁶ That the poets mention each other (directly or indirectly) is understandable, although we cannot always with any certainty link to the court the persons named.⁴⁷ As for other people, we can begin with Callimachus, who concludes the fourth and final book of his *Aetia* with *The Lock of Berenice* (fr. 110 Pf.). In 245 BC, Berenice II dedicated a lock of hair in the Temple of Arsinoe Zephyritis after Ptolemy III, whom she had recently married, returned home safely from the Third Syrian War against Seleucus II.⁴⁸ When the astronomer Conon came across an unfamiliar constellation in the night sky and was unable to find it on his charts, it occurred to him that it might be the lock of Berenice transformed into stars. Callimachus, who has the lock itself speak, gives to Conon—and of course to the queen as well, who like the poet himself came from Cyrene—a prominent place in the *aition* of this catasterism, thereby underlining his importance, although declining to give us any further biographical details about the astronomer. (On the poem's structure, see Weber 1993: 266–267; Marinone 1997.) In an epinician ode (fr. 384 and 384a Pf.), Callimachus celebrates the

⁴⁴ The place in which court society, with all its cultural trappings, was located—that is, the court as a physical structure within the βασιλεία—is no more specific a representation, not even through the work of Callimachus; in this connection, only two passages deserve citation: the description of the inside of the palace in Theocritus *Id.* 15 and the naming of the Μουσῆιον in Herodas 1.31 (Weber 1993: 199–201, 284, 320–321).

⁴⁵ Weber 1993: 199–335; on Arsinoe II, see the summary by Lelli 2002: 10. See also the contributions of Barbantani and Prioux in this volume.

⁴⁶ *PP* VI 14717 with Weber 1993: 269–270; Alan Cameron 1995: 244–246; Crisculo 2003: 319–320; Stephens 2005: 247–248.

⁴⁷ See the material in Weber 1993: 285–293, esp. *Call. Ep.* 33 GP = 10 Pf. (Timarchus, *PP* VI 16792), *Ep.* 34 GP = 2 Pf. (Heraclitus, *PP* VI 16689), *Ep.* 57 GP = 7 Pf. (Theaetetus, *PP* VI 16692), with the epigrams of Hedylus and Dioscorides; there are also several passages in Callimachus' *Iambi* that refer to colleagues.

⁴⁸ On the historical context, Huss 2001: 341–354; on reactions in visual culture, Kuttner 1999: 112–113.

victory of Sosibius at the Isthmian and Nemean Games as well as in Athens and Alexandria. This Sosibius is identical to the man mentioned in the sources as a φίλος of Ptolemy III, so that the work is to be dated later than *The Lock of Berenice*.⁴⁹ The most interesting lines are those containing a direct characterization of the honorand (fr. 384.53–56):

καὶ τὸν ἐφ' οὗ νίκαισιν αἰείδομεν, ἄρθμια δῆμῳ
 εἰδότα καὶ μικρῶν οὐκ ἐπιληθόμενον,
 παύριστον τὸ κεν ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀφνειῷ τις ἴδοιτο
 ᾧτιμι μὴ κρε[ί]σσων ἢ νόος εὐτυχίης.

And him (sc. Sosibius) we celebrate for his victories, knowing friendly to the people and forgetting not the poor, a thing so rarely seen in a rich man, whose mind is not superior to his good fortune (Trypanis).

Sosibius is represented here as a man of the people, who fulfills perfectly the ideal of the *euergetes*. We do not know what relation this representation has to the historical Sosibius, and a description of this sort is hardly a first in literary history, but it may allow us a wished-for glimpse of court life from the outside. Finally, the Philip mentioned in *Epigram* 3 GP (= 3 Pf.) could be identical to the doctor named as a member of the royal court.⁵⁰

People from the world of the court are also mentioned in the epigrams of Posidippus. This is the case for Sostratus of Cnidus, who is mentioned in relation to the construction of the Φάρος in *Epigram* 11 GP (= 115 AB). Although nothing is said about his patronymic or his coming from Cnidus, the epigram is clearly tailored to the uses of the new construction and the glory of the king (Weber 1993: 332–334). Above all, the nauarch Callicrates of Samos is thought worthy of being honored in several ways: his dedication of the Temple of Arsinoe Zephyritis is poeticized in *Epigrams* 12 and 13 GP (= 116 and 119 AB); he is named in his function as royal nauarch; but most important is the description of his dedication as “a shrine that is a safe harbor from all the waves” (116.8 AB, ἱερὸν παντὸς κύματος εὐλίμενον), which highlights the use of the temple (administered by its priestesses) by those traveling to or from Egypt.⁵¹ Additional relevant material is

⁴⁹ Fuhrer 1992: 139–204; Weber 1993: 209–212 on the identification of the man; Kerkhecker 1997: 14–15. On the intention: Fantuzzi 2005: 265–266.

⁵⁰ *PP* VI 16640 with Weber 1993: 295.

⁵¹ Weber 1993: 258–259; Barbantani 2001: 44–47; Bing 2002–2003. The dedication of a seashell in this temple, which Call. *Ep.* 14 = 5 Pf. alludes to (Stephens 2005:

to be found among the new epigrams attributed to Posidippus: *Epigram* 39 AB, which also mentions the nauarch in connection with the temple of Arsinoe Zephyritis. This accumulation of evidence is more than fortuitous and it allows us to conclude that Callicrates was clearly eager to promote the new cult that he had established.⁵² Finally, *Epigram* 74 AB makes reference to a Delphic oracular response to Callicrates, in gratitude for which he dedicated a bronze chariot to the Θεοὶ Ἀδελφοί; the connection with the royal couple, doubtless his patrons, becomes the more obvious when we learn that Callicrates was the first eponymous priest of this cult in 272/1. (On the dating, see Bing 2002–2003: 250–251; D.J. Thompson 2005: 279.) *Epigram* 95 AB refers to the dedication of a bronze statue for Apollo by one Medeius son of Lampon from Olynthus. This must have to do with the doctor and priest named above, who also undoubtedly belonged to the inner circles of the court,⁵³ though admittedly we have no further details about this person and his actual activities at court. Another epigram attributed to Posidippus is *SH* 978, preserved only in fragments, which talks about a watered enclosure with a statue of Arsinoe in the middle.⁵⁴

Hedylus alludes to a golden rhyton in the form of the Egyptian god Bes that was placed as a dedication in the Temple of Arsinoe Zephyritis (*Ep.* 4 GP). Ctesibius had equipped it with a device that played music as it poured out wine (Weber 1993: 259; Lelli 2002: 18; Ambühl 2007: 284). Ctesibius is important for the Ptolemaic court because a

245–246), is also relevant here, although Callicrates is not mentioned; this goes for Dioscorides too: *Ep.* 14 GP.

⁵² For a detailed treatment, see Ambühl 2007: 278–285. We leave to one side here the question of whether Callicrates was aiming “to mediate between the new world and the old” (Bing 2002–2003: 254)—that is, between the Egyptian and the Greek world—and whether there was a well-defined intellectual program behind his actions, or whether he simply combined individual ideas according to his personal preferences.

⁵³ This identification is considered secure on the basis of the combination of documents set out by Bing 2002. On the identification of the nomarch Etearchus with the victor in the chariot races mentioned in *Ep.* 76 AB, see D.J. Thompson 2005: 279–280.

⁵⁴ *FGE* anon. 151a = *113 AB, with Weber 1993: 295, 332; Barbantani 2001: 51–52; D.J. Thompson 2005: 271. But this text is relevant in this connection only if one reads Βα[λάκρου or Βά[κχωνος instead of Βα[σιλείς in line 3, thus linking the monument to a high-ranking individual in the Ptolemaic court. The like also applies to *SH* 969, a fragmentary elegy whose connection with Egypt (other than simply mentioning the country by name) is not secure (Weber 1993: 310 n. 3, 315). Barbantani (2001 *passim* and 2007: 20 with n. 6) argues for an allusion to a Ptolemaic general, possibly the Lycian Neoptolemus (*PP* VI 15224).

few of his innovative mechanical inventions were set up to help draw crowds during the Grand Procession (πομπή) of Ptolemy Philadelphus at the Ptolemaia described by Callixenus (probably to be dated to 279/8 or 275/4).

These poems, particularly the epinicians and epigrams, have a common feature in the clear association of named figures with the king and royal family; in his own poetry, particularly of these two genres, Callimachus aligns himself with this program. These poems are part of a larger system, one that at least in one aspect—namely the connection with the court—is self-referential but at the same time through the larger worldwide community of poets could develop a considerable impact abroad. The focus is of course hardly surprising, as the βασιλεύς represented the center of attention for all members of the court. Poetic representation of the generosity of the φίλοι or praise of the talent (τέχνη) of intellectuals in a certain area in turn increased the king's prestige.

My description of the courtly society up to this point may have given the impression that it was a purely Greek community in all its parts. And yet if we bear in mind the concept of a *monarchie bicéphale*, the question of the relationship between the Ptolemies on the one hand and their court on the other is revealed as nothing less than central.⁵⁵ First of all, it was necessary for Ptolemy I on pragmatic grounds to be able to fall back on experts who were either themselves Egyptian or were extremely well informed about Egypt in order to have any understanding of the temple organizations, the Egyptian pantheon, the theology, and the practical execution of the cult in a way that was in any case already seen as normal under the Achaemenids and Alexander.⁵⁶ That there were Egyptians in Alexandria is not disputed;⁵⁷ nor is the fact that intensive contact with the priestly elite was the norm in the context of the celebration of Egyptian rites in the temples (Clarysse

⁵⁵ Weber 1993: 23–24 with nn. 2 and 3. The relationship between king and indigent subjects seems to have been different in the case of the Seleucids and even the Antigonids (Weber 1997: 40–42); on the situation at the time of Alexander's death, Weber 2007a: 242–256, making the point that what Alexander would have wanted had he lived longer is virtually impossible to ascertain.

⁵⁶ Huss 2001: 213–218; Legras 2002: 966–967, 989–990; Verhoeven 2005: 279–280. On the degree of understanding that was actually achieved, and on interpreters or translators, see Weber 1993: 143 n. 2; Thissen 1993: 241; Wiotte-Franz 2001: 63–71.

⁵⁷ Stephens 1998: 168, 179; Hunter 2003c: 46–47 on the material finds from the city harbor.

2000). If we follow the literary tradition, it would appear that an Egyptian priest named Manetho, who came from Sebennytus in the Nile Delta, and was even referred to as a φίλος, composed an *Egyptian History* in Greek (Αἰγυπτιακά).⁵⁸ It is probably safe to assume that this work was supposed to make Egyptian culture, religion, and history more accessible to the Greeks, though the exact role of its author and his precise intentions are as fiercely contested as its date.⁵⁹ The careful analysis of a number of monuments in hieroglyphics has brought to light additional material, which admittedly brings with it a number of interpretive problems: for instance, with regard to the literary genre of autobiography.⁶⁰ People tend to claim in writing about themselves that they had a close relationship with the king—that is to say, a position at court. Petosiris, the high priest of Thoth from Hermopolis, boasted of the king's favor and his exceptional popularity among the ladies-in-waiting at court; at the same time he made reference to his outstanding capacities in the fields of architecture and jurisprudence, and moreover evinced an interest in the Greek language and the Greek literature of his day.⁶¹ The governor of the city of Memphis, whose name is not known but who was simultaneously a priest of Ammon, also served Ptolemy as an advisor (Derchain 2000: 18–19; Verhoeven 2005: 280–281), as did the priest and general Djed-Hor; one Nectanebus served as a general, as did Wennofer, who remarks that the king took his advice.⁶² From the time of Ptolemy II we have the priest Senoucheri, son of a Greek named Jason, who claims to have been a member of the “secret chamber” in Alexandria and to have been esteemed by the king on account of his wisdom, eloquence, loyalty, and trustworthiness.⁶³ Also worth noting are Smendes the son

⁵⁸ *FGrHist* 609 with *PP VI* 14614; Weber 1993: 134 with n. 4; Legras 2002: 974–977; H.H. Schmitt 2005: 670.

⁵⁹ He is usually dated to the reign of Ptolemy II; Verhoeven 2005: 281. It is possible that he corrected the account of Hecataeus of Abdera (Legras 2001: 136).

⁶⁰ Legras 2002: 969–970 has identified fifteen individuals, of whom four belong to the reign of Ptolemy I, three to the reign of Ptolemy II, and one other to the reign of Ptolemy III; see further Verhoeven 2005. On Egyptian autobiography, see Derchain 2000: 14–15.

⁶¹ *PP III* 5406 with Legras 2002: 979–983; Baines 2004: 45–48; Verhoeven 2005: 280.

⁶² On Djed-Hor, see Derchain 2000: 23; Legras 2002: 969 n. 31. On the others, see D.J. Thompson 1992: 324 with n. 2; Hölbl 1994: 29; Stephens 1998: 168.

⁶³ Derchain 2000: 23–29 with an analysis of all his responsibilities; Legras 2002: 983–985; Verhoeven 2005: 281. We also know that he distinguished himself in the foundation of the cult of the Θεοὶ Ἀδελφοί in Upper Egypt. Whether the name of

of Pchorchonsis, priest in Thebes and royal advisor with the title “First after the King,” and, also under Ptolemy III, Amasis the son of Smendes, also a priest in Thebes as well as a functionary in Memphis and Hermopolis (Legras 2002: 972).

It must be confessed that the relationships that these various individuals had with the king can hardly be precisely defined, and that the question of whether they really belonged to upper-class society cannot now be decisively settled. The fundamental problem is that for some of these functions we have no Greek descriptions, and so with regard to titles such as “The King’s Brother” or “The King’s Relative,” for example, it is not clear to what extent we are dealing with personal closeness as is implied in the word φίλος (Huss 1994: 92; Hölbl 1994: 29; Collombert 2000: 48). But even though we are not talking about a very large group in terms of numbers, there is nonetheless one significant enough finding: the Greek sources transmit to us a picture of upper-class society that consists predominantly of Greeks and Macedonians. That nevertheless members of the Egyptian elite brought with them wide-ranging intellectual capabilities should remain beyond question.⁶⁴ However, the question arises whether from this finding we can draw any conclusions that can contextualize the poetry of the period. This is especially relevant for the issue of what impact elements of Egyptian culture had on the work of Callimachus and his contemporaries, and what sorts of intentions were bound up with this process, has been the subject of some debate in the scholarly literature.⁶⁵ In any event, precisely because several of the Egyptians known to us by name in the king’s circle are also known to have been influenced by Greek culture and were thus clearly oriented toward the culture that was dominant politically, it becomes difficult to attest whether they contributed any fundamentally different perspectives to the poets who may have absorbed their influence.⁶⁶ Nonetheless one must allow that there is a

his father can be brought together with the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes is doubtful (Legras 2002: 984 with n. 117).

⁶⁴ Whether we should go so far as Legras 2002: 991 and consider that membership of the Museum was open to Egyptians seems questionable. What is certain is that several of the individuals attested by name have taken up various elements of Greek culture—for example, in their tombs (Baines 2004: 46–47).

⁶⁵ For the proactive and conceptually wide-ranging employment of Egyptian material, see Koenen 1993; Selden 1998; Stephens 2002b and 2003. *Contra*, Weber 1993: 371–388; Hose 1997: 47 n. 3; Asper 2004: 16–20; Goldhill 2005; Effe 2007: 263. For a different take, see Hunter 2003c: 46–53.

⁶⁶ The Greeks saw “no necessity to take these representations of their sovereign for the sake of his Egyptian subjects as an integral part of their own understanding of

difference between Egyptian members of the administrative elite and figures like Manetho, who could contribute at a literary level.

This brings us at last to the question what place Hellenistic poetry had in life at court during the time of Callimachus, bearing in mind first of all the apparent fact that in some (though by no means all) of the texts people are mentioned who we can assume were actually present at court. If we look at the poetry of the period in this way, we come up against a sobering discovery: in the extant work of Callimachus we have no concrete indication how the poems were supposed to be performed or appreciated. The poems of his contemporaries are no more helpful in this regard. The scene described in Theocritus *Idyll* 15.22–24, 60, 65–86, in which a section of the royal palace is opened to the public for the festival of Adonis, and Arsinoe II hires a female singer for a hymn, is clearly exceptional. For this reason, most scholars have ruled out a concrete performance context within the framework of an appropriate festival for Callimachus' hymns or his epigrams. It has been argued that since the poetry of Callimachus and his contemporaries is distinguished by such a high level of complexity and by such an abundance of allusions, only a purely literary audience would have been in a position to appreciate the literature of the *poetae docti* at all (Hunter and Fuhrer 2002; Ukleja 2005: 17–19, 278; Effe 2007: 263–264). On the other hand when the hymns are considered in the context of divine epiphanies, which were one of the definitive elements in Hellenistic religion, it becomes impossible to rule out public performance. For the hymns come stylistically, in the Hellenistic period, to focus even more on gods, as part of cultic honors for kings and in aretalogies, in the interest expressed in old cults, and in the scenic presentation of cult images.⁶⁷ Therefore, it would seem to make sense to posit several different dimensions of performance or appreciation of poetry in this period, as well as several different levels in its understanding or interpretation (Weber 1993: 101–130; Asper 2004: 14–15; Effe 2007: 278). This means that despite the difficulty and verbal complexity of the poetry, which have often been remarked upon, there are also certain elements (names, key ideas, descriptions) that could

themselves as Greeks;" those who felt moved to integrate must therefore have been an "Egyptian elite with Hellenizing tendencies:" so Asper 2001: 103 with n. 140. On Petosiris, see Hölbl 1994: 29.

⁶⁷ I. Petrovic 2007: 138–139, 270–271, and *passim*. On the dating and on possible occasions for performance: Vestrheim 2005.

probably be grasped among a wider readership.⁶⁸ And this is all the more so in view of the fact that the different literary genres serving a diverse audience must be strictly distinguished from one another. Hellenistic literature certainly did not consist entirely of exclusivist, highbrow literature. Even within individual genres—for example, the epigram—various purposes and goals seem to have been envisaged for different works.⁶⁹ That individual works were later brought together and through being read in conjunction could produce reciprocal allusions is no more an obstacle to this way of thinking than the idea that texts produced by poets at court in Alexandria were read by colleagues abroad.⁷⁰ The hypothesis that solely through reading did the epigrams and epinicia of Callimachus and other poets reach the members of courtly society mentioned in such works may be right in certain cases but should by no means be generalized.

If we think on the one hand of the symposia that the βασιλεύς held with his closest circle, at which a profoundly competitive, not to say agonistic environment existed,⁷¹ and on the other hand of the many elements of Ptolemaic self-fashioning and self-representation operative in Alexandria, then it becomes clear that we are dealing with a rich and varied culture of festivals. Such a culture had various different addressees in mind, being capable of restricting itself exclusively to an elite circle or of orienting itself toward the masses, so that it often becomes very difficult to identify a definite target audience. The occasions for festivals of the close inner circle (which also could aim to have a corresponding effect outside that sphere) were most often found on dates that had something to do with the king and his dynasty: festivals in the king's honor (above all his birthday), festivals for the queen, for members of the dynasty both living and dead, for its patron deities, and finally in celebration of military victories.⁷² Besides the like of these, we can take for granted that the festivals associated with the

⁶⁸ Asper 2001: 95–96 sees aetiologies (for a broad readership) and intertextualities (for a small one) as the main distinguishing features of Hellenistic poetry.

⁶⁹ See Parsons 2002: 103–104; Meyer 2005: 130–143 on epigrams for readers and listeners.

⁷⁰ On Aratus: Weber 1995: 309–310. Besides this, there are various ways of determining how the literature of the time was received in the χώρα (Parsons 2002: 109–110).

⁷¹ Völcker-Janssen 1993: 78–81; Alan Cameron 1995: 71–103; Bing 2000: 144–147; Hose 1997: 54–55; Barbantani 2001: 16–17, 41–43; Vössing 2004: 154–158.

⁷² On all types of festivals, see Weber 1993: 170–182; Perpillou-Thomas 1993: 151–163. On victories of the royal family: D.J. Thompson 2005: 273.

traditional Greek gods, whose cults were imported into Alexandria, were also celebrated. That the known Greek festivals were linked to processions, sacrifices, hymns, and competitions should also be taken into account when appropriate.

A glance at the diplomats and special envoys who came from all parts of the Greek world, and whose names are often recorded after visits to the royal court, makes clear that we should envision a literary audience that possessed a very high level of education.⁷³ The scene portrayed in Theocritus *Idyll* 15 alludes in the first instance to the fact that the Ptolemies possessed an exorbitantly large royal palace (as we know from other sources), which encompassed not only the Museum, the Library, and the royal residence itself, but also extensive parkland (Sonne 1996; Nielsen 2001). Temporary, movable structures could be put up inside for festivals: one famous instance included Ptolemy II's cavernous festival marquee, which according to Callixenus contained 130 couches (κλῖναι) and was decorated with huge sculptures of eagles (a symbol of Ptolemaic rule) as well as other figures and friezes. "This was probably the customary context in which the king displayed to foreign delegates at the festival his wealth and divine ancestry, and the secure state of his rule, before crowds of cheering Alexandrians."⁷⁴ What was extraordinary about these arrangements was that these structures were to be used on only one occasion, or perhaps a few, but were in any case not designed for permanent installation. On such occasions we should probably imagine various performances of light entertainment (Vössing 2004: 158–165), but also (bearing in mind the kind of competition described above) poetic recitation of parlor pieces. It was in precisely in environments like this that the king could be especially approachable (Hose 1997: 54).

The πομπή described by Callixenus did admittedly have different dimensions to it and a different target group.⁷⁵ It served to draw people toward a constructed image of the monarch and at the same time projected outwards the ideology of his rule in a spectacular way. At this festive event, among all the other things happening, the mechanical

⁷³ Weber 1993: 135–136 with n. 1; 145–146 with nn. 4–6; 150–151 with nn. 6 and 7; 154–164; 166–167.

⁷⁴ Vössing 2004: 107–110, 115–116 (for the quotation, see p. 110); Athen. 5.196a–97b with von Hesberg 1989, 1996; Pfrommer 1999: 69–75.

⁷⁵ Athen. 5.197c–203b with Rice 1983; Köhler 1996: 35–45; Pfrommer 1999: 62–68; D.J. Thompson 2000.

inventions of Ptolemaic scholars were exhibited at the same time that the Ptolemaic conception of monarchy was being communicated impressively through the statues of Alexander and Ptolemy I, and the personifications of Corinth and of other city-states. Above all, though, there was the separate guild or company of Dionysiac ritual experts, who played an essential role in organizing and running the festivals associated with the cults of the ruler and the dynasty—and who counted poets among their number (Le Guen 2001: 2.34–36, 89; Aneziri 2003: 115–118, 240–242). Their priest, Philicus of Corcyra, belonged to a group of tragic poets at court, although it seems safe to assume that their dithyrambic performances were directed at a rather broader audience.⁷⁶

In the Ptolemaic court, Callimachus found himself in an environment that offered him and his fellow poets an inexhaustible abundance of material and inspiration for poetry, but also—so we can assume—an atmosphere with a permanent resonance. An engagement with the literary heritage of the past and at the same time an incorporation of debates about contemporary trends in literature and about tradition and innovation in the various literary genres can easily be identified in his work (Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004); this engagement furthered the attempt to make his own cultural identity more secure. But material and inspiration for poetry were also found in the people of the place and the events that they were involved in, as well as from the research that was carried on in the Museum. The multifaceted nature of the content is fundamentally related to the character of the court as a political and administrative center, and also one closely implicated in the public representation of the monarch.⁷⁷ Poets, too, were influenced by the structures of communication and interaction that were part of the workings of the court (Hunter and Fuhrer 2002: 165). That the head of the οἶκος who happened to be in power at the time, his family, and his close associates had a central position there is hardly surprising in view of the structure of Hellenistic monarchies in general and of the unique power relations in Egypt in particular. It is all the more remarkable, in contrast, how subtly and sensitively Callimachus deals with this context in his poetry (Hose 1997: 63–64).

⁷⁶ On their priest Philicus of Corcyra (*PP* VI 16725): Weber 1993: 424; Bing 2000: 142. After looking at his elaborate hymn (*SH* 677), we may well speculate that Philicus felt at home in both poetic worlds.

⁷⁷ Weber 2007c: 110–11. This observation in no way compels us to see the poet as part of a well-oiled propaganda machine, as Dunand 1981 seems to imply.