

# Court Intrigue and the Death of Callisthenes

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IMPLICATED IN A PLOT by the Royal Pages (the *basilikoi paides*) against Alexander's life in Bactria in 327 B.C.E., the historian Callisthenes was condemned as a traitor and died—either tortured and hanged, or imprisoned and carted about with the army until disease brought about his death.<sup>1</sup> His demise marks something of a nadir in Alexander's reign; indeed, centuries after the fact, Curtius could claim that no one's execution incited greater resentment of Alexander among the Greeks (*nullius caedes maiorem apud Graecos Alexandro excitavit invidiam*).<sup>2</sup> The reason for that resentment is not difficult to discover. Despite the avowals of the Alexander-apologists that the Pages had implicated Callisthenes, his supposed involvement in the plot was unsupported by evidence. Arrian concedes as much, observing that most traditions had no indication of Callisthenes' guilt, while Plutarch cites a letter purportedly written by the king himself in the immediate aftermath of the conspiracy, in which the Pages were said to have confessed under torture that the conspiracy was entirely their own, and that nobody else was cognizant of the plot.<sup>3</sup>

The underlying cause of Callisthenes' downfall is, instead,

<sup>1</sup> For Callisthenes' fate Arr. 4.14.3 cites divergent accounts by Ptolemy *FGrHist* 138 F17 (put to death; so too Curt. 8.8.21) and Aristobulus *FGrHist* 139 F 33 (died while imprisoned). Aristobulus clearly based his account on Chares (*FGrHist* 125 F 15 = Plut. *Alex.* 55.9).

<sup>2</sup> Curt. 8.8.22. On the injustice of his death compare Seneca *NQ* 6.23, Cic. *Rab. Post.* 23, Phld. *De morte* 34 (*P.Herc.* 1050; p.78 ed. W. B. Henry).

<sup>3</sup> Arr. 4.14.1–2, Plut. *Alex.* 55.6; see further below. J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander. A Commentary* (Oxford 1969) 155, argues for the genuineness of Alexander's letter; cf. N. G. L. Hammond, *Sources for Alexander the Great. An Analysis of Plutarch's Life and Arrian's Anabasis Alexandrou* (Cambridge 1993) 98–99.

generally traced to his role in thwarting the attempts, earlier in the same year, to introduce *proskynesis* into the protocols of Alexander's court. Particularly important was Callisthenes' alleged behaviour before a large gathering of banqueters (including Macedonian and Persian courtiers) staged to facilitate the adoption of the custom. While a number of sophists and flatterers, primed for the event, lauded Alexander's achievements and urged the adoption of the practice, Callisthenes spoke openly against its introduction, with results fatal for Alexander's ambitions in this regard.<sup>4</sup> The episode is most fully detailed by Arrian and Curtius, and described by Arrian as a "widely accepted story."<sup>5</sup> In the surviving traditions, it is largely this opposition to *proskynesis* that is cast as the real reason for Callisthenes' undoing, with the Conspiracy of the Pages simply providing a timely opportunity for his removal. Thus Plutarch characterizes his successful intervention against *proskynesis* as an achievement beneficial to the Greeks and to Alexander, but as one fatal to Callisthenes (*Alex.* 54.3):<sup>6</sup>

τοὺς μὲν Ἑλληνας αἰσχύνῃς ἀπήλλαξε μεγάλης καὶ μείζονος  
Ἀλέξανδρον, ἀποτρέψας τὴν προσκύνησιν, αὐτὸν δ' ἀπόλεσεν.

By diverting the king from *proskynesis*, he delivered the Greeks from a great disgrace and Alexander from a greater one, but he destroyed himself.

Valerius Maximus (7.2.ext.11) goes so far as to omit any reference at all to the Pages' Conspiracy, and instead follows Callisthenes' opposition to *proskynesis* immediately with a reference to his condemnation. In line with this source tradition, the

<sup>4</sup> For the impact of Callisthenes' opposition see Arr. 4.12.1, Curt. 8.5.21, Plut. *Alex.* 54.2, Just. 12.7.3.

<sup>5</sup> Arrian 4.10.5–12.6, Curt. 8.5.5–6.1, more briefly Plut. *Alex.* 54.3 (who clearly presupposes that the story is well known), Just. 12.7.1–3. The somewhat different *proskynesis* story, derived from Alexander's court chamberlain Chares, is discussed below.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Arr. 4.12.7, Just. 12.7.2–3.

association of Callisthenes' resistance to *proskynesis* with his untimely demise has become a standard feature in many general surveys of Alexander's reign.<sup>7</sup>

It is the purpose of this paper to interrogate more closely the circumstances of Callisthenes' downfall. There are two bases upon which such an interrogation is warranted. One is the existence of a significant and coherent narrative thread in our source traditions that points to the agency of court rivals in contriving his death. This narrative does not entirely divorce Callisthenes' death from the issues of *proskynesis* and the Pages' Conspiracy, for the attested actions of his rivals cluster around these same episodes; it urges instead a more nuanced reading of those episodes, and a recognition that Callisthenes' enemies at court were instrumental in the way in which events unfolded. Viewed against the backdrop of this hostility, Callisthenes' response to *proskynesis* in itself emerges as a less decisive determinant of his fate than some evaluations of his demise would suggest.

The other cause for caution arises from concerns about the *proskynesis* tradition itself. Many have doubted the very historicity of the *logos* in which Callisthenes thwarted *proskynesis* before a large public gathering.<sup>8</sup> It is rarely acknowledged that any such

<sup>7</sup> See for example R. Stoneman, *Alexander the Great* (London/New York 1997) 59: "this intransigence of Callisthenes naturally diminished his standing with Alexander, and in due course led to his being implicated in the Conspiracy of the Pages"; I. Worthington, *Alexander the Great: Man and God* (Abingdon 2004) 192: "Callisthenes' opposition [to *proskynesis*] would ... cost him his life."

<sup>8</sup> Cf. n.5 above for the debate story. The historicity of the arguments ascribed to the debate has been repeatedly questioned, and for some this renders questionable the historicity of the occasion itself: among others see T. S. Brown, "Callisthenes and Alexander," *AJP* 70 (1949) 225–248, at 242–244; J. V. P. D. Balsdon, "The 'Divinity' of Alexander," *Historia* 1 (1950) 363–388, at 372–379; H. Bowden, "On Kissing and Making Up: Court Protocol and Historiography in Alexander the Great's 'Experiment with *Proskynesis*,'" *BICS* 56 (2013) 55–77, at 72–75. Others are willing to allow some foundation in reality: E. Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," in H. J. Dell (ed.), *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honour of Charles Edson* (Thessaloniki 1981)

expunging from the record of this ‘*proskynesis* debate’ occasion would significantly undermine the assumed nexus between Callisthenes’ outspoken response and his demise. Further, even if we allow for the occurrence of some such public gathering for the attempted introduction of *proskynesis* (a possibility not discounted below), we need to be alert to the potential shaping of the episode and of Callisthenes more generally in our traditions. As Spencer has shown, writers in the Roman imperial period in particular were drawn to Callisthenes as a figure through whom might be explored sensitive issues around the resistance to tyranny; as a philosopher and writer in the employ of an autocrat, he became for senatorial elites under autocratic emperors “a means of interrogating the kinds of freedom and discourse that are available to subjects (rather than citizens).”<sup>9</sup> Callisthenes’ utility as a model for the exploration of Roman concerns about free speech, and for concerns about the delineation of the role of the philosopher as advisor, will have encouraged a focus on the elements within the Callisthenes tradition that fitted these interests; his resistance to *proskynesis*—and especially the ‘grand debate’ version of that resistance—offered an ideal episode for the exploration of such anxieties.<sup>10</sup> This is so whether authors

27–71, at 48–52, with slight modifications in E. Badian, “Alexander the Great between Two Thrones and Heaven,” in A. Small (ed.), *Subject and Ruler* (*JRA* Suppl. 17 [1996]) 11–26; A. B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian’s History of Alexander II* (Oxford 1995) 77–78.

<sup>9</sup> D. Spencer, “Roman Alexanders: Epistemology and Identity,” in W. Heckel et al. (eds.), *Alexander the Great. A New History* (Chichester 2009) 251–274, at 269.

<sup>10</sup> At times, this focus results in anecdotes that display scant regard for historicity. Thus, for example, in material purportedly from the Augustan rhetor L. Cestius Pius, Callisthenes is said to have been murdered by Alexander in response to an ill-considered jest on the wounding of the king (*Sen. Suas.* 1.5). Cobbled together from disparate elements (the mechanics of the death are borrowed from Alexander’s murder of Cleitus, while the substance of the jest is one of the floating anecdotes pervasive in the Alexander traditions) and ‘quoted’ from Cestius by the elder Seneca, this vignette speaks to the pervasive Roman interest in Callisthenes as a motif with which to

chose ultimately to condemn or exonerate Callisthenes: thus the frankness of Callisthenes' resistance to *proskynesis* invites Arrian's censure as being inappropriate to a subject of a king, while Curtius (in a highly Romanised account that attests to the adaptability of the episode to Roman concerns) lauds him as a veritable *vindex publicae libertatis*.<sup>11</sup> The narrative potential inherent in the debate model may have encouraged the emphasis on, and elaboration of, the version of the *proskynesis* material found in the surviving late traditions.

A second *proskynesis* anecdote, derived from Alexander's court chamberlain Chares and known to Plutarch and Arrian, provides the foundations for a rather different reading of Callisthenes' downfall, one that places greater emphasis on the role of other players in engineering Callisthenes' fall from the king's favour. Chares describes an intimate gathering in the presence of the king. The symposiasts toasted Alexander and performed *proskynesis* to him, in return receiving a kiss, until Callisthenes surreptitiously omitted the performance of *proskynesis*. Read in isolation from the public debate episode against which it is juxtaposed by both Plutarch and Arrian (and by which juxtaposition it is imbued with a potentially distorted significance), Chares' story gives little sense that Callisthenes' omission was the cause of an irretrievable breach with the king. Although Alexander was clearly angered, the act elicited only a restrained, albeit pointed, response from him: a refusal to confer on Callisthenes the reciprocal kiss.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, rather than an explanation

explore anxieties about the behaviour of intellectual figures under autocrats. See further Spencer, in *Alexander the Great. A New History* 271–272.

<sup>11</sup> Arr. 4.12.6 (cf. 4.8.5 for a similar condemnation of Cleitus' *parrhesia*), Curt. 8.5.20. For the presence of Roman elements in Curtius' version of the episode see A. B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford 1988) 116–117.

<sup>12</sup> Chares *FGrHist* 125 F 14a–b (= Plut. *Alex.* 54.4–6, Arr. 4.12.3–5). On the significance of the kiss see Bowden, *BICS* 56 (2013) 70–71; C. Matarese, "Proskynesis and the Gesture of the Kiss at Alexander's Court: The Creation of a New Élite," *Palamedes* 8 (2013) 75–85, at 80–81.

of Callisthenes' demise, the culminating point of Chares' story seems to have been Callisthenes' ill-considered quip in response to Alexander's refusal of a kiss ("Well, then, I shall go away the poorer by a kiss!"). It is, in essence, an anecdote about Callisthenes' repartee and perhaps about his boorish manners.<sup>13</sup> (That is a subject to which Chares seems to have been drawn on more than one occasion; he reported also upon Callisthenes' refusal to drink a toast from Alexander's own cup.)<sup>14</sup> What Chares' story does betray, however, is the active fostering by other agents of tension between Alexander and Callisthenes, for Callisthenes' omission of *proskynesis* is stated to have passed unnoticed by Alexander, who was deep in conversation with Hephæstion at the time; only the intervention of another participant, Demetrius, caused it to be brought to the king's attention.

Objections may be made to placing undue weight on Chares' account, for his work (the Ἱστορίαι περὶ Ἀλέξανδρον) was not without its critics. The first/second century C.E. author of a survey of Hellenistic historians accuses Chares of falsehoods and malice, specifying Parmenion as a particular object of his hostility.<sup>15</sup> Some of the surviving fragments of the work may suggest that Callisthenes did not receive particularly favourable treatment either; in addition to the two anecdotes that expose Callisthenes' lack of social graces, Chares gave an account of Callisthenes' death which, in attributing it to obesity and lice, did not reflect well on the victim.<sup>16</sup> His *proskynesis* story itself may serve not only to illuminate Callisthenes' ill-timed wit but also to

<sup>13</sup> Chares F 14a (= Plut. *Alex.* 54.6). On Callisthenes' lack of manners as the point of Chares' *proskynesis* story see Bowden, *BICS* 56 (2013) 70. Callisthenes' temperament is explicitly condemned as boorish by both Plutarch (*Alex.* 53.2) and Arrian (4.10.1).

<sup>14</sup> Chares F 13 (= Ath. 434D); on this anecdote see further below.

<sup>15</sup> *P.Oxy.* LXXI 4808.i.1–9.

<sup>16</sup> Chares F 15 (= Plut. *Alex.* 55.8–9). Ascribing Callisthenes' death to natural causes may also have served as apologia for Alexander: see Bosworth, *Historical Commentary* II 100; E. Badian, "Conspiracies," in A. B. Bosworth et al. (eds.), *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford 2000) 50–95, at 72 n.38.

trivialise his act of resistance—a resistance that, on Chares’ telling, Alexander himself did not immediately notice.<sup>17</sup> The fragmentary state of Chares’ work, however, precludes any firm assessment of his shaping of Callisthenes, and if even that treatment were unsympathetic this need not immediately entail outright falsification of the *proskynesis* episode.<sup>18</sup> As the king’s chamberlain, Chares would have been well placed to observe the kinds of detail that colour the stories of Callisthenes’ behaviour at symposia.<sup>19</sup>

Chares is, moreover, not alone in hinting at a more complex dynamic around Callisthenes’ demise. The mechanics of that downfall, and the impressions that Chares gives of the place of *proskynesis* in it, are echoed by, and find further elucidation from, Plutarch. He too suggests that, while the *proskynesis* episode(s) clearly created something of a rift between Alexander and Callisthenes, this was not necessarily an irrevocable breach, and that its significance derived from the successful exploitation by Callisthenes’ enemies. After canvassing both episodes of *proskynesis* in his *Alexander*, Plutarch characterizes their aftermath as a time when such “estrangement [i.e. between Alexander and Callisthenes] was growing up” (τοιιάυτης ὑπογινομένης ἀλλοτριότητος, *Alex.* 55.1); his wording is suggestive of a gradual process rather than a definitive and decisive rift, even when the more dramatic debate *logos* is taken into account.<sup>20</sup> Plutarch goes on to

<sup>17</sup> So Badian, in *Ancient Macedonian Studies ... Edson* 51.

<sup>18</sup> The inclusion by Chares, in the *proskynesis* story and again possibly in his story of Callisthenes’ refusal of Alexander’s cup (F 13, see below), of the role of others in bringing Callisthenes’ infringements to Alexander’s attention could be cast as somewhat sympathetic to Callisthenes, and so caution must be exercised in claiming too programmatic an understanding of his work.

<sup>19</sup> Chares’ fragments betray a wealth of circumstantial detail about Alexander’s social occasions and the trappings of his personal life (consider FF 1, 2, 4, 19a–b). His role may also have entailed control of access to the king. See L. Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great* (New York/Oxford 1960) 60; C. Brunelle, “Alexander’s Persian Pillow and Plutarch’s Cultured Commander,” *CJ* 112 (2017) 257–278, at 262.

<sup>20</sup> See Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* 153, on the use of the present participle

preserve traces of the active exacerbation of this estrangement, with Hephaestion alleging in the aftermath of Chares' banquet that Callisthenes had agreed to perform the gesture but had betrayed his undertaking.<sup>21</sup>

Most notable, however, is Plutarch's explicit representation, in his *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* (65C–D), of Callisthenes as the victim of the very group of courtiers who had engineered the deaths of Parmenion and Philotas. Plutarch is able, moreover, to furnish names of the culprits. Singled out as the chief orchestrator of the court's calumnies is Medius of Larissa, famed as the host of the prodigious drinking party in Babylon at which Alexander fell sick and died.<sup>22</sup> Named also, in a fashion that implies their identification as Medius' 'disciples', are Hagnon, Bagoas, Agesias, and Demetrius. The passage is worth quoting in full:

ἦν δ' ὁ Μήδιος τοῦ περὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον χοροῦ τῶν κολάκων οἶον ἔξαρχος καὶ σοφιστῆς κορυφαῖος ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀρίστους συντεταγμένων. ἐκέλευεν οὖν θαρροῦντας ἄπτεσθαι καὶ δάκνειν ταῖς διαβολαῖς, διδάσκων ὅτι, κὰν θεραπεύσῃ τὸ ἔλκος ὁ δεδηγμένος, ἢ οὐλὴ μενεῖ τῆς διαβολῆς. ταύταις μέντοι ταῖς οὐλαῖς, μᾶλλον δὲ γαγγραῖναις καὶ καρκινώμασι διαβρωθεὶς Ἀλέξανδρος ἀπώλεσε καὶ Καλλισθένη καὶ Παρμενίωνα καὶ Φιλώταν· Ἄγνωσι δὲ καὶ Βαγώαις καὶ Ἀγησίαις καὶ Δημητρίοις ἀφειδῶς ἐνέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑποσκελίζεσθαι, προσκυνούμενον καὶ καταστολιζόμενον καὶ ἀναπλαττόμενον ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὡσπερ ἄγαλμα βαρβαρικόν.

Medius was, if I may call him so, leader and skilled master of the choir of flatterers that danced attendance on Alexander, and were banded together against all good men. Therefore he urged them not to be afraid to assail and sting with their calumnies, pointing

to represent the imperfect indicative at Plut. *Alex.* 55.1.

<sup>21</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 55.1; the suggestion that there was some prior agreement on *proskynesis* among those in attendance was also in Arrian (4.12.3). The appearance of this detail in both Plutarch and Arrian hints that it may derive from their mutual source, Chares; so too may the notice about the subsequent behaviour of Hephaestion, who certainly featured in Chares' banquet account.

<sup>22</sup> Arr. 7.25.1; Plut. *Alex.* 75. 4, 76.1–2 (= *Ephemerides FGtHist* 117 F 3a–b); Diod. 17.117.1; Just. 12.13.6 ff.



out that, even if the man who is stung succeeds in healing the wound, the scar of calumny will still remain. In fact it was by such scars, or rather such gangrenes and cancers, that Alexander was consumed so that he destroyed Callisthenes, Parmenio, and Philotas, and put himself without reserve into the hands of men like Hagnon, Bagoas, Agesias, and Demetrius, to be brought low, by submitting to be worshipped, bedecked, and fantastically tricked out by them, after the manner of a barbaric idol. (transl. Babbitt)

This claim that Callisthenes fell prey to a smear campaign orchestrated by influential court insiders has some intrinsic plausibility. Intrigue can indeed be traced around the downfall of Philotas, as Plutarch implies.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, many of the men listed by Plutarch do feature as calumniators in our traditions: Bagoas, for example, appears in court intrigue in Curtius, although his victim is the Persian nobleman Oxines rather than Callisthenes.<sup>24</sup> Others on Plutarch's list can, however, be linked specifically to Callisthenes. Thus Demetrius is surely to be identified as the Demetrius who features in Chares' version of the experimentation with *proskynesis* at Alexander's court; of this individual, Arrian (4.12.5) specifies that he was the son of Pythoanax and was one of Alexander's Companions, while Plutarch (*Alex.* 54.6) furnishes a nickname, Pheidon. (We might perhaps detect some verbal play on this nickname in Plutarch's phrase Δημητρίοις ἀφειδῶς.)

It is likely that the *proskynesis* episodes form the backdrop for the machinations of others of Callisthenes' detractors, although detail here is elusive. Plutarch's reference at *Quomodo adulator* 65D is the sole attestation of an individual named Agesias; con-

<sup>23</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 49.1, Curt. 6.8.22. See W. Z. Rubinsohn, "The 'Philotas Affair'—A Reconsideration," *Ancient Macedonia* 2 (1977) 408–420, at 413–414; W. Heckel, "The Conspiracy Against Philotas," *Phoenix* 31 (1977) 9–21. In this context it is notable that Hephaestion, who is not named in the *Quomodo adulator* but whose agitation against Callisthenes is remarked upon at Plut. *Alex.* 55.1, played an active part in Philotas' demise; see Heckel 17–19.

<sup>24</sup> Curt. 10.1.22–38, 42. Badian, in *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* 92, expresses doubts about the Bagoas 'subplot', but does not note Bagoas' inclusion in Plutarch's list of calumniators.

sequently this Agesias is often identified with a better-known figure, the Argive poet Agis, who features in Arrian and Curtius in the context of the *proskynesis* experiment.<sup>25</sup> Arrian and Curtius, who understand the introduction of *proskynesis* in large measure as a gesture designed to acknowledge Alexander's god-like status, single out Agis as among the most servile proponents of the divinity of the king. Curtius, indeed, pairs Agis with Cleon of Sicily who, in his account, is the chief advocate of the introduction of *proskynesis* and speaks against Callisthenes to this effect.<sup>26</sup> Agesias might, as easily, be identified with one Nicesias, another of the court flatterers known to have assimilated Alexander to the gods in his flattery: Nicesias responded to Alexander's discomfiture on a certain occasion with the quip "Oh king, what are we to do, when even you gods suffer such agonies?"<sup>27</sup> The behaviours of both Agis and Nicesias are consistent with Plutarch's characterisation of Callisthenes' enemies as men through whose corrupting influence Alexander submitted to be "worshipped, bedecked and fantastically tricked out ... after the manner of a barbaric idol."

Others of Callisthenes' named enemies come to the fore in the context not of *proskynesis* but of the Pages' Conspiracy. In his discussion of that conspiracy, Plutarch writes that Hagnon and Lysimachus had accused Callisthenes of giving the impression that he was determined to bring down a tyrant; surely also to be

<sup>25</sup> W. Heckel, *Who's Who in the Age of Alexander the Great* (Malden 2006) 8 s.v. Agis.

<sup>26</sup> Arr. 4.9.9, Curt. 8.5.8. Another example of Agis' flattery is preserved by Plut. *Quomodo adulat.* 60B; the same material is possibly associated with the name of Anaxarchus (who, in Arrian's *proskynesis* account, assumes the role played by Cleon in Curtius) by Philodemus *De adul.* 4 (D.-K. II 72 A 7). That Anaxarchus is the subject of this anecdote in Philodemus is, however, doubted by M. Gigante and T. Dorandi, "Anassarco e Epicuro 'Sul regno'," in F. Romano (ed.), *Democrito e l'atomismo antico* (Catania 1980) 479–497, at 494–496.

<sup>27</sup> ὦ βασιλεῦ, τί δεῖ ποιεῖν ἡμῶς, ὅτε καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ θεοὶ τοιαῦτα πάσχετε; Phylarchus *FGrHist* 81 F 11 (= Ath. 251C); cf. Hegesander *FHG* IV 414 fr.6 (= Ath. 249D–E).

associated with their names are the more specific allegations aired in the wake of the discovery of the plot, namely that Callisthenes had advised the instigator of the plot, the page Hermolaus, that the pathway to the greatest fame was the murder of the most famous, and had further urged him to remember that Alexander was mortal (*Alex.* 55.2–3). It is tempting to connect further with this material an anecdote which Arrian includes in an excursus on Callisthenes' tactlessness that precedes his treatment of the *proskynesis* affair; of unspecified origin, the anecdote concerns an alleged conversation between Philotas and Callisthenes, in which Callisthenes identified, for Philotas' benefit, the tyrannicides as those most honoured in Athens.<sup>28</sup>

Scrutiny of the surviving traditions reveals traces of other nebulous attacks upon Callisthenes. We get such a hint, for example, in an anecdote about his alleged refusal to drink a toast of neat wine to Alexander from the king's own prodigiously large cup at a drinking party; the ever-abstemious Callisthenes did not, he said, want to "drink Alexander" and then "need Asclepius."<sup>29</sup> The witticism itself was clearly popular and circulated widely, and few versions are concerned with more than the bon mot itself.<sup>30</sup> Plutarch, however, furnishes two detailed

<sup>28</sup> Arr. 4.10.3. For a connection between this anecdote and the slanders circulating in the context of the Pages' Conspiracy see too Bosworth, *Historical Commentary* II 76.

<sup>29</sup> οὐδὲν δέομαι, ἔφη, Ἀλεξάνδρου πὶὼν τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ δεῖσθαι. The anecdote is preserved at Ath. 434D and Plut. *Quaest.conviv.* 623F–624A within discussions about the prodigious drinking in Alexander's court. Plutarch specifies that the cup declined by Callisthenes was "the great cup of Alexander," the size and notoriety of which is apparent from Menander's allusion to it in *Kolax* (fr.293 K. = Ath. 434C). S. T. Teodorsson, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Table Talks* I (Goteborg 1989) 120–121, calculates its capacity as about 2.5 litres. For the significance of the cup see F. Pownall, "The Symposia of Philip II and Alexander II of Macedon: The View from Greece," in E. Carney et al. (eds.), *Philip II and Alexander the Great: Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives* (Oxford 2010) 55–65, at 64.

<sup>30</sup> Athenaeus (434D) lists Chares, Aristobulus, and Lynceus of Samos as authorities for the story; it may also have been reported by Ephippus.

versions that, read in combination, are particularly illuminating for present purposes. For one, he indicates in *De cohibenda ira* (454E) that the remark earned Alexander's ire (hence the inclusion of the story in that treatise).<sup>31</sup> That other agents were instrumental in engendering Alexander's ire on this occasion is suggested in Plutarch's second version, in *Quaestiones conviviales* (623F–624A), where he gives no indication that Alexander himself noted Callisthenes' actions and implies instead that the king became aware of Callisthenes' quip only through the agency of others. Thus in a commentary on this passage, Teodorsson reads Plutarch's description of Callisthenes' "coming into ill-repute" with Alexander (Καλλισθένης ἐν διαβολῇ γενέσθαι πρὸς αὐτόν) as indicating that Callisthenes' refusal of Alexander's cup "apparently occurred after the king had left the party, and was reported later ἐν διαβολῇ."<sup>32</sup> Plutarch's wording here recalls the slander (*diabole*) that he had emphasized as the means of Callisthenes' undoing in the *Quomodo adulator* (65C–D). While in *Quaestiones conviviales* no indication is given of the identity of the slanderers on this occasion, it may be noted that among those named in Plutarch's list of calumniators in *Quomodo adulator* were men notorious for their capacity for sympotic indulgence, and thus men who may well have delighted in exploiting Callisthenes' contrariness in that regard; Hagnon and Medius in particular are prominently attested at symposia.<sup>33</sup>

This symposium incident might, then, be added to the list of occasions on which Callisthenes' relationship with the king was actively undermined by other members of Alexander's entourage. Viewed as a whole, the material points to a protracted

<sup>31</sup> Callisthenes' austerity and abstemiousness are similarly alleged elsewhere to have alienated him from the king's affections: Plut. *Alex.* 52.7 (in the context of the death of Cleitus).

<sup>32</sup> Teodorsson, *Commentary* I 120. So too G. H. Macurdy, "The Refusal of Callisthenes to Drink the Health of Alexander," *JHS* 50 (1930) 294–297, at 295.

<sup>33</sup> For Medius see 603 above, and Nicobule *FGrHist* 127 F 1 (= Ath. 434C). For Hagnon, Phylarch. F 41 (= Ath. 539C), Plut. *Alex.* 40.1, Ael. *VH* 9.3.

campaign of attack, one consistent with Plutarch's evocative description of the lengthy process of the stinging, healing, and scarring of calumny. It was an attack intensified by an opportunistic exploitation of Callisthenes' response to *proskynesis*, but the undermining may have begun before that episode, for not all of the active calumny against Callisthenes can be securely dated. The banquet at which Callisthenes made his quip about Asclepius is a case in point.<sup>34</sup> So, too, are the slurs circulated by Hagnon and Lysimachus. While Plutarch treats these in his transition from the *proskynesis* material to the Pages affair, he does not explicitly claim that they first arose within that window. Rather, his account is suggestive of a lengthy and sustained rumour campaign: men such as Lysimachus and Hagnon persistently spread their calumnies (Λυσίμαχοι καὶ Ἄγνωνες ἐπεφύοντο φάσκοντες, *Alex.* 55.2), and their allegations about Callisthenes' interactions with the Pages are stated to have been taken more seriously when the Pages' Conspiracy was discovered. Plutarch follows the substance of the slanders of Lysimachus and Hagnon thus (*Alex.* 55. 3):

διὸ καὶ τῶν περὶ Ἑρμόλαον ἐπιβουλευσάντων τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ καὶ φανερῶν γενομένων, ἔδοξαν ἀληθέσιν ὅμοια κατηγορεῖν οἱ διαβάλλοντες.

The accusations of his detractors seemed more plausible when the conspiracy against Alexander by Hermolaus and his fellow conspirators was discovered.<sup>35</sup>

This may suggest that some such allegations were being aired

<sup>34</sup> It is frequently suggested that this banquet postdates the *proskynesis* experiment (so Brown, *AJP* 70 [1949] 245; Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* 148), but the anecdote itself offers no firm temporal indicator. Teodorsson, *Commentary* 121, sees in Callisthenes' witticism an equation of Alexander with Dionysus, which would have gained particular point when the Macedonian court was beginning to take an active interest in that god (as it did in Sogdiana: see A. B. Bosworth, *Alexander and the East: The Tragedy of Triumph* [Oxford 1998] 120–121), but beyond that little may be deduced about its timing.

<sup>35</sup> Immediately prior, Plutarch has reported the calumnies ascribed directly to Hagnon and Lysimachus; immediately following is the substance of Callisthenes' supposed advice to Hermolaus that the greatest fame was to be achieved by the killing of the most famous victim.

prior to the discovery of the Pages' plot, and an origin prior even to the *proskynesis* episode(s) cannot be ruled out. In like fashion, the temporal origins of Arrian's alleged exchange between Philotas and Callisthenes (suggested above to be linked to the calumnies of Hagnon and Lysimachus) are difficult to pinpoint. Arrian's anecdote supposes a dramatic context prior to Philotas' death in 330, but the material need not have been in circulation that early, and there is no indication that Callisthenes was embroiled in the Philotas affair at the time; the supposed conversation may rather be a concoction designed to render Callisthenes vulnerable by drawing him *post eventum* into the orbit of that alleged failed conspirator, since the subtext of the supposed exchange is clearly the putative murder of Alexander. The campaign that brought down Philotas himself, it might be remembered, had been a similarly protracted one.<sup>36</sup>

Whatever the starting point of the undermining of Callisthenes, it is clear that the agency of his opponents played a pivotal role in securing his ultimate demise. It was they who brought to Alexander's attention Callisthenes' initial non-performance of *proskynesis*, and subsequently cast that non-performance as a betrayal of a previous undertaking. They may also have been instrumental in the events of the second, more public *proskynesis* episode in which Callisthenes is supposed to have vociferously resisted the introduction of the new protocol.<sup>37</sup> In both of our detailed accounts of this episode, it is asserted that

<sup>36</sup> Philotas was the target of allegations at least as early as the campaign in Egypt (Arr. 3.26.1); his rivals looked keenly for opportunities to discredit him over a lengthy period (Plut. *Alex.* 48.4–7).

<sup>37</sup> Bosworth, *Historical Commentary* II 77, accepts the historicity of two *proskynesis* episodes. Arrian and Plutarch are not the first writers to suggest two occasions: L. Prandi, *Callistene: uno storico tra Aristotele e i re macedoni* (Milan 1985) 25–26, suggests that Philodemus shows an awareness of the existence of the two separate *proskynesis* episodes by using a plural in *De adul.* (*P.Herc.* 1675 col. 5.31–32 = *FGrHist* 124 T 21), ἀντέκοπ[ψε δ'] αὐτοῦ ταῖς προσκυνήσεσι. On the two episodes see also P. Goukowsky, *Essai sur les origines du myth d'Alexandre (336–270 av. J.-C.) I Les origines politiques* (Nancy 1978) 48–49.

the event was carefully stage-managed, and that the court sophists had been primed to advocate the new praxis.<sup>38</sup> Callisthenes' very presence is anomalous on that score, given that his apparent disdain for *proskynesis* had been manifested at the event detailed by Chares.<sup>39</sup> While Arrian gives no indication that Callisthenes' rebuttal of the speech in favour of *proskynesis* was anticipated, Curtius' account gives a strong impression that—presumably on the basis of Callisthenes' evident discomfiture in the initial experiment—his opponents were hoping to goad him into openly voicing his opposition. Curtius writes that Cleon's speech praising Alexander was quite obviously aimed at Callisthenes.<sup>40</sup> His opponents might have felt confident in their chances of wrong-footing him. Callisthenes' susceptibility to making ill-conceived displays of rhetorical prowess had already been demonstrated, when he had risen to Alexander's bait during a banquet and delivered an impromptu speech criticising the Macedonians. (That earlier display, which had undone the goodwill that Callisthenes had earned through an immediately preceding encomium of the Macedonians, was itself a significant episode in Callisthenes' decline, alienating Callisthenes from the affections of Alexander.<sup>41</sup>) In this earlier episode, it had been Alexander himself who had goaded Callisthenes into outspokenness; it was an example from which Callisthenes' opponents could draw a useful lesson.<sup>42</sup> In both of the *proskynesis* episodes

<sup>38</sup> Arr. 4.10.5, cf. 4.11.1; Curt. 8.5.9–10.

<sup>39</sup> For the temporal priority of the occasion described by Chares see Bosworth, *Historical Commentary* II 88.

<sup>40</sup> Arr. 4.11.1–2, Curt. 8.5.13.

<sup>41</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 53.3–54.2 (citing the Peripatetic biographer Hermippus *FGrHist* 1026 F 73); cf. Philostr. *VA* 7.2.

<sup>42</sup> This episode is taken by some as suggestive of Alexander himself actively campaigning to undermine Callisthenes: Brown, *AJP* 70 (1949) 247; Balsdon, *Historia* 1 (1950) 372 n.46; D.-T. Ionescu, "The King and his Personal Historian: The Relationship between Alexander of Macedon and Callisthenes in Bactria and Sogdiana," in K. Nawotka et al. (eds), *Alexander the Great and the East: History, Art, Tradition* (Wiesbaden 2016) 245–261, at 253. The story may have apocryphal elements, but we need not follow E. Badian,

detailed by our sources, then, Callisthenes' opponents were instrumental in undermining his relationship with the king.

They were further active in keeping alive this mistrust. In particular, the impact of their slander for the ultimate conviction of Callisthenes in connection with the Pages' Conspiracy was considerable. Sparked by the king's flogging of Hermolaus for an infringement upon royal prerogatives at a hunt, the conspiracy itself was fuelled by the Pages' resentment of Alexander's autocratic behaviour.<sup>43</sup> Nebulous enough to be drawn into play in any unrest at court, the aspersions which Callisthenes' detractors had been circulating against him—gossip about his supposed admiration of tyrannicides—were easily dovetailed with such complaints once the Pages' plot had been exposed. Indeed, beyond Callisthenes' 'guilt by association' through his perceived relationship with Hermolaus and through his popularity with the young men at court (a factor itself exploited by Callisthenes' rivals to cast suspicion on him), the slanders seem to have formed the entire substance of the case against him.<sup>44</sup> The sole authorities whom Arrian could find to have provided any claim of Callisthenes' guilt at all, namely Ptolemy and Aristobulus, asserted that the Pages had confessed that he had encouraged their crime (and not, significantly, that he had been privy to the plot as such).<sup>45</sup> The supposed testimony of the Pages, then, pointed towards the kind of incitement that formed the substance of

*Gnomon* 33 (1961) 660–667 (rev. of Pearson, *The Lost Histories*), at 661, in giving no credence to the whole story of Callisthenes' two contrasting speeches.

<sup>43</sup> See E. Carney, *King and Court in Ancient Macedonia: Rivalry, Treason and Conspiracy* (Swansea 2015) 211–216, for a compelling analysis of the Pages' motivations.

<sup>44</sup> Arr. 4.13.2 for Hermolaus; Plut. *Alex.* 55.1 claims that Lysimachus and Hagnon drew attention to the crowd of young men who followed Callisthenes (attention which, in the context of the Pages' Conspiracy, proved injurious). Callisthenes' vulnerability to implication with the Pages would be greater still if R. D. Milns, "Callisthenes on Alexander," *MeditArch* 19/20 (2006/7) 233–237, at 234, is correct that Callisthenes was the official tutor of the Pages; there is, however, no explicit claim for such a role in the traditions.

<sup>45</sup> Aristob. F 31 (= Arr. 4.14.1), Ptol. F 16.



Hagnon and Lysimachus' allegations (on which see 605–606 above). Our sources, however, further betray the fact that such encouragement was not even reported by the Pages themselves (as the apologetic accounts would have it), but was merely the substance of calumnies from Callisthenes' detractors. Plutarch follows the discovery of the Pages' plot with an elaboration of the accusations levelled by Callisthenes' enemies, and explicitly states that none of Hermolaus' supposed accomplices denounced Callisthenes (*Alex.* 55.5–6). In a very similar passage, Arrian himself (following on from his description of Callisthenes' resistance to the *proskymesis* experiments) describes the allegations about the Pages' Conspiracy in terms only of detractors (4.12.7):

ἐφ' ὅτῳ τεκμαίρομαι μὴ χαλεπῶς πιστευθῆναι τοὺς κατειπόντας Καλλισθένους, ὅτι μετέσχε τῆς ἐπιβουλῆς τῆς γενομένης Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐκ τῶν παίδων, τοὺς δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἐπῆρεν αὐτὸς ἐς τὸ ἐπιβουλεῦσαι.

I gather that this is why people easily credited the detractors of Callisthenes, who suggested that he had a part in the plot against Alexander by his Pages, or that he was the instigator of it.

There is a clear implication, in both Arrian and Plutarch, that calumny from his enemies rather than any implication at all from the Pages formed the substance of the case against Callisthenes.

What emerges, then, is a picture of Callisthenes as a man undone by intrigue at Alexander's court. We need not posit that his opponents themselves constituted a unified 'faction'.<sup>46</sup> Notably, not all of those who are attested as Callisthenes' enemies appear among the coterie listed in Plutarch's *Quomodo adulator*. Thus, for example, there is the Lysimachus who features as Callisthenes' critic in Plutarch's *Alexander* (55.1). Any assessment of Lysimachus' allegiances is complicated by uncertainty

<sup>46</sup> For salutary cautions against the identification of factions in a court where "personal ambition, political opportunism and survival" must all have played a part, see W. Heckel, "Factions and Macedonian Politics in the Reign of Alexander the Great," in *Ancient Macedonia IV* (Thessaloniki 1986) 293–305, esp. 305.

about his identity: despite frequent assertions to the contrary, he may well be the *somatophylax* and later king of that name, rather than the elderly former tutor of Alexander.<sup>47</sup> Unmentioned also in Plutarch's list is Hephaestion, whose status and close relationship with Alexander distinguish him from the more marginal players of the *Quomodo adulator*.<sup>48</sup> His hostility, as treated above, is focused explicitly on Callisthenes' failure to perform *proskynesis*; the ensuing animosity may well have been occasioned by personal embarrassment and a desire to deflect criticism from himself, if Hamilton is right to suspect that Hephaestion had been entrusted with co-ordinating the attempted introduction of the new court protocol.<sup>49</sup> Hephaestion's own prior behaviour cautions against too ready an assumption of the existence of consistent 'factions'; while he and Craterus had both been instrumental in the downfall of Philotas, their elimination of a mutual rival did not allay their hostility towards each other.<sup>50</sup>

The situation among those listed as Callisthenes' enemies in the *Quomodo adulator* may, however, have been different, for there Plutarch implies a degree of cohesion through his labelling of Medius as the "leader and skilled master of the choir of

<sup>47</sup> For Lysimachus the tutor see Heckel, *Who's Who* 153 s.v. Lysimachus 1; Callisthenes' influence over the young men of the court (see n.44 above) could conceivably have roused the jealousy of such a figure. Regarding the other Lysimachus (the *somatophylax*), Justin 15.3.7–8 claims that he was a close adherent of Callisthenes; the anecdote is, however, highly suspect, see H. S. Lund, *Lysimachus: A Study in Early Hellenistic Kingship* (London/New York 1992) 8–10.

<sup>48</sup> See W. Heckel, *Alexander's Marshals: A Study of the Macedonian Aristocracy and the Politics of Military Leadership*<sup>2</sup> (London/New York 2016) 75–100.

<sup>49</sup> Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* 153; for others adopting a similar view see the list in Heckel, *Alexander's Marshals* 93 n.100. That Hephaestion's talents were "organisational rather than military" (so Heckel 78) would have commended him for a role co-ordinating the introduction of *proskynesis*; so too will his ready acceptance of Alexander's orientalising tendencies, on which see Plut. *Alex.* 47.9.

<sup>50</sup> Curt. 6.8.17. For enmity between Hephaestion and Craterus see Plut. *Alex.* 47.11–12; Diod. 17.114; Heckel, *Alexander's Marshals* 94–95.

flatterers.” Of those named as the ‘choristers’ (Hagnon, Bagoas, Agesias, and Demetrius), all with the exception of Agesias are likely to have ranked among the *hetairoi*; with the possible exception of Demetrius, however, they shared the experience of being non-Macedonians.<sup>51</sup> As outsiders elevated into that elite status, they may not have had the independent agency enjoyed by one such as Hephæstion or even Lysimachus.<sup>52</sup> Their careers have, moreover, points of intersection that may hint at a degree of interaction: having both served as trierarchs in India, Medius and Hagnon are again both to be found in the service of the Antigonids in the Diadochan era.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See Heckel, *Who's Who* 128 s.v. Hagnon, 109 s.v. Demetrius 3, 158 with 317 n.409 (Medius); for Bagoas, Heckel, *Alexander's Marshals* 255 n.48. As a member of the Aleuadae, Medius will perhaps have been a more obvious claimant for *hetairos* status than the outsiders Hagnon and Bagoas. As to Macedonian ethnicity, the case of Demetrius is unclear; on the basis of his father being Pythonax (Arr. 4.12.5), Heckel, *Who's Who* 109, adds the possibility that he was Greek rather than Macedonian. His nickname, Pheidon, could however hint at a Macedonian lineage, if it alludes in any way to Pheidon, tyrant of Argos who featured in the genealogies of Macedonia's royal Temenid line (thus S. Sprawski, “The Early Temenid Kings to Alexander 1,” in J. Roisman et al. [eds.], *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia* [Malden 2011] 127–144, at 128).

<sup>52</sup> Again Lysimachus is a complex case. Even if the Lysimachus of *Alex.* 55.1 is the *somatophylax*, the actual degree of his influence in court is questionable. It has been suggested that his family hailed from Thessaly rather than from Macedonia proper (so Lund, *Lysimachus* 2), and that he may have been elevated to the bodyguards under Philip II rather than at the behest of Alexander (so W. Heckel, “The *Somatophylakes* of Alexander the Great: Some Thoughts,” *Historia* 27 [1978] 224–28, 228, although Lund 5 has reservations); both factors may have had an impact on his level of personal influence, and the paucity of references to him during Alexander's lifetime (if these are not the product of Ptolemaic bias) give further cause to question his clout. Lysimachus may have felt it advantageous to cultivate the group that Plutarch locates around his fellow-Thessalian Medius, a group with whom his contact is indicated by his likely presence among Medius' guests at the fateful party in Babylon (Lund 5–6).

<sup>53</sup> Trierarchies: Arr. *Ind.* 18.7–8 (and for the identification of Hagnon with the ‘Andron’ here named see Heckel, *Who's Who* 128). Service with the

From this latter, arguably more cohesive group of men whom Plutarch characterises as arch-flatterers, hostility towards Callisthenes could largely be characterized as a struggle for position among the *kolakes* within Alexander's court. This is how Plutarch implicitly casts the conflict again in his *Alexander* (53.1), when he writes of Callisthenes annoying "the other sophists and flatterers." The proximity between Callisthenes and those castigated as flatterers in our traditions has been obscured by the emphasis on Callisthenes' *parrhesia* in later traditions.<sup>54</sup> Near-contemporary critics such as Timaeus, however, did not hesitate to label Callisthenes himself a *kolax*, and to condemn him for encouraging the very divine pretensions ("investing a mere mortal with the aegis and thunderbolt") that his opponents enthusiastically embraced.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Timaeus accuses Callisthenes of having a corrupting influence on the king, and thus views him in

Antigonids: *IG II*<sup>3</sup> 985.8 (Hagnon); Diod. 19.68, 75, 77, 20.50, *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 498 (Medius).

<sup>54</sup> On Callisthenes' frankness see for example Diog. Laert. 5.5. For frankness as a quality foreign to a flatterer see Phld. *P.Herc.* 1082 col. 2.1–14 (cf. T. Gargiulo, *CronErc* 11 [1981] 104), Plut. *Quomodo adulator* 59B.

<sup>55</sup> Callisthenes *FGrHist* 124 T 20. The underlying tenor of Callisthenes' work has been much discussed: see for example Pearson, *The Lost Histories* 33–46; Milns, *MeditArch* 19/20 (2006/7) 233–237; B. Simons, "Kallisthenes und Alexander," *WürzJbb* 35 (2011) 61–82; M. Zahrnt, "Kallisthenes von Olynth: ein verkannter Oppositioneller?" *Hermes* 141 (2013) 491–496. Particularly pertinent is Callisthenes' handling of the recognition of Alexander's divine parentage at Siwah and the attendant prophecies from other shrines (124 F 14a), clearly a target of Timaeus' wrath (T 20); so too his presentation of Alexander's prayer before the troops at Gaugamela, with the call on Zeus to confirm (via victory) Alexander's status as Zeus-born (δίοθεν, F 36), and his description of the sea at Pamphylia performing *proskynesis* to Alexander (F 31) (if the reference to *proskynesis* is not to be dismissed as an addition by the scholiast: see Pearson 36–37). On Callisthenes' handling of Alexander's divine descent see Prandi, *Callistene* 94–100. For other flatterers indulging in similar conceits compare Agis (605 above). Callisthenes' literary work may not have been vastly different in approach from that of Medius, although the meagre remains of Medius' work (see *FGrHist* 129 F 1, with Pearson 69–70) make full assessment impossible.

much the same light as Plutarch later did Callisthenes' own calumniators, through whose corrupting influence Alexander "[submitted] to be worshipped" (*Quomodo adulat.* 65F). While Timaeus' own hostility may be dismissed in part as a product of intellectual rivalry,<sup>56</sup> he was not alone in identifying sycophantic tendencies in Callisthenes' approach: Philodemus too recognized Callisthenes as a flatterer of the king, although he was prepared to distinguish between the conceits of Callisthenes' history and the performance of *proskynesis*:<sup>57</sup>

ἐν μὲν γὰρ ταῖς ἱστορίαις ἀπεθέου τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον, ἀντέκο[ψε δ'] αὐτοῦ ταῖς προσκυνήσεσι.

while he was deifying Alexander in his histories, he resisted his obeisances.

Any wrangling for primacy among the flatterers and sophists of the court will have been as intense as that among Alexander's military echelons, for the symposium was itself a locus of power. Indeed, Curtius laments (and does so in connection with one of the men named among Callisthenes' calumniators in Plutarch's *Quomodo adulator*) that some of the Greek flatterers who flocked around Alexander "were given preferential treatment by the king even over his relatives and the generals of his greatest armies"; the king's own predilection for hard drinking made him particularly susceptible, so Plutarch avers, to the flatterers who

<sup>56</sup> Compare C. A. Baron, *Timaeus of Tauromenium and Hellenistic Historiography* (Cambridge 2013) 61, 114–119, on Timaeus' calumnies against Aristotle and his hostility to the Peripatos. Timaeus' intellectual interests overlapped with those of Callisthenes and Aristotle: consider, for example, Timaeus' creation of a chronology of Olympic victors (*FGrHist* 566 T 1) and the listing of Pythian victors by Callisthenes and Aristotle (*FD* III.1 400 [Rhodes/Osborne, *GHI* 80]). Moreover his composition of a separate work on Pyrrhus, distinct from his main historical survey, had a predecessor in Callisthenes' work on the Sacred War distinct from his Hellenic history (Baron 38).

<sup>57</sup> Phld. *P.Herc.* 1675 col. 5.29–32 = *FGrHist* 124 T 21; cf. Strabo 17.1.43 = F 14a, who identifies elements of flattery in Callisthenes' account of the visit to Siwah. On the possible interplay between Philodemus' judgement and that of Timaeus see M. Capasso, "L'intellettuale e il suo re. (Filodemo, *l'Adulazione*, *P.Herc* 1675 Col. V 21–32)," *Studi di Egittologia* 2 (2005) 47–52.

operated in the social and political setting of the symposium.<sup>58</sup>

Callisthenes will have been a target worthy of his rivals' machinations. While his renown is now almost entirely the product of his connection to Alexander, Callisthenes was for his contemporaries a figure of note already before the campaign, and Plutarch claims explicitly that his reputation aroused envy.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Callisthenes did little to lessen the risks of his status by cultivating strategic friendships or alliances with other court power-brokers, content instead in the popularity he enjoyed with the (arguably more marginal) younger and older echelons at court.<sup>60</sup> Relevant in this regard is his disdain for social gatherings and his disinclination to partake in the heavy drinking of the Macedonian court, attitudes to which his opponents present a stark contrast.<sup>61</sup> The sympotic tendencies of Hagnon and Medius have been observed already; the circumstances of Hephaestion's own death, preceded as it was by prolonged bouts of heavy drinking, reveal a comparable level of indulgence in him.<sup>62</sup> This alleged dichotomy between Callisthenes and his enemies may, of course, be exaggerated: writers critical of the

<sup>58</sup> Curt. 8.5.8, Plut. *Alex.* 23.7. For the court as locus of power and rivalry, all dependent on the favour of the king himself, see G. Weber, "The Court of Alexander the Great as Social System," in *Alexander the Great: A New History* 83–98, at 94–95.

<sup>59</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 53.2. A measure of his early stature is implicit in the story of Callisthenes' boast that it would be his writing that would secure Alexander's glory: Arr. 4.10.2. The historicity of the anecdote is defended by A. Collins, "Callisthenes on Olympias and Alexander's Divine Birth," *AHB* 26 (2012) 1–14. For his pre-existing reputation, note also his honours (alongside Aristotle) from the Delphian Amphictyony (n.56 above).

<sup>60</sup> Of influential figures, only Lysimachus is listed as a friend, and that report (at Justin 15.3.7–8) is of dubious historicity: see n.47 above. For his popularity with the young and the old see Plut. *Alex.* 53.1, cf. 54.2–3, and n.44 above.

<sup>61</sup> See above on Callisthenes' refusal of Alexander's cup; on his general disdain for socialising and drinking, Plut. *Alex.* 53.2.

<sup>62</sup> See above for Medius and Hagnon. On Hephaestion's death, Arr. 7.14.1, 7.14.4; Diod. 17.110.8; Plut. *Alex.* 72.2.

Macedonian court emphasised its perceived profligacy, particularly in its consumption of alcohol, and a contrasting emphasis on Callisthenes' reserve will have served to distinguish a figure who was to become painted as a champion of Greek values.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, we need not dismiss entirely the impression given by our sources of a Callisthenes who made no effort to win over in social settings those who would otherwise be his rivals.<sup>64</sup>

It might be posited, too, that Callisthenes became increasingly vulnerable as the campaign progressed, a vulnerability heightened when his avoidance of *proskynesis* illuminated a growing divergence between the king's objectives and Callisthenes' own work. The surviving fragments of Callisthenes' campaign narrative suggest a central concern for the reception of Alexander's image in the Greek world, and for the presentation of the king as the champion of the panhellenic cause.<sup>65</sup> After the defeat of Darius and the subsequent dismissal of the contingents from the League of Corinth allies, Alexander's campaign had entered a new phase; the panhellenic aspect of the campaign faded from the spotlight, and Alexander, clad with increasing frequency in the borrowings of Persian regalia, pressed on at the head of a Macedonian army in which soldiers from the Greek states served the Macedonian king directly, as mercenary forces.<sup>66</sup> The tenor

<sup>63</sup> E. Carney, "Symposia and the Macedonian Elite: The Unmixed Life," *Syllecta Classica* 18 (2007) 129–180, esp. 133–134 on Greek views in general. Notable in particular are the descriptions of Macedonian heavy drinking by Callisthenes' fellow-Olynthian Ephippus: *FGrHist* 126 F 3 (= Ath. 434A–B); that he highlighted the role of excessive consumption in the deaths of Hephaestion and Alexander is likely.

<sup>64</sup> Again Philotas, whose arrogance and aloofness fuelled the disdain of his rivals, provides a point of comparison: see Plut. *Alex.* 48.4, cf. 49.8.

<sup>65</sup> Note, for example, that Callisthenes records the exhortation that Alexander delivered to the *Thessalian and Greek* contingents at Gaugamela (F 36 = Plut. *Alex.* 33.1). On Callisthenes' work as important for Alexander's Greek audience see M. Zahrt, "Von Siwa bis Persepolis. Überlegungen zur Arbeitsweise des Kallisthenes," *AncSoc* 36 (2006) 143–174, at 145–147.

<sup>66</sup> Adoption of Persian regalia: Plut. *Alex.* 45.1; increasing use of Persian court trappings and ceremonial: A. J. S. Spawforth, "The Court of Alexander

of Callisthenes' *Deeds* will no longer have suited so closely his patron's needs, rendering him more exposed to the machinations of his rivals.<sup>67</sup>

A shift in the balance of power contingent upon the removal of Callisthenes can be conjecturally traced. His downfall will not have directly cleared the path to military appointments in the way that the ousting of Philotas had earlier done, but the success against him of men like Hagnon and Medius is likely to have consolidated their influence at court, and it is striking that they are only subsequently attested in command posts.<sup>68</sup> (The only attestation of the obscure Demetrius 'Pheidon', besides his exposure of Callisthenes' evasion of *proskynesis*, belongs to the Indian phase of Alexander's campaign and may also indicate a consolidation of influence in this period, although the evidence here is tenuous.)<sup>69</sup> Further, it is notable that Anaxarchus, construed as Callisthenes' rival in many accounts and a man closely aligned with those listed as Callisthenes' opponents in Plutarch's

the Great between Europe and Asia," in A. J. S. Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge 2007) 82–120, at 93–106. On the dismissal of the Greek troops at Ecbatana: Arr. 3.19.5–6, Curt. 6.2.17, Diod. 17.74.3. It is unclear whether (and if so, how far) Callisthenes' narrative extended beyond this point. In terms of clearly identifiable contexts, the surviving fragments of his work extend only as far as Gaugamela (FF 36–37). Coverage of the fate of the Branchidae (ca. 329 B.C.E.) is also possible: Prandi, *Callistene* 83–87, 105–111. The context of F 38 (concerning the Araxes River) is unclear, and if Callisthenes (like Aristotle (*Meteor.* 350a24–25) identified the Araxes with the Tanais, F 38 could conceivably belong to a description of (for example) Alexander's pursuit of Bessus to the Tanais (so Arr. 3.30.7); this last fragment is not, however, explicitly drawn from the account of Alexander's campaigns.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. D. Golan, "The Fate of a Court Historian, Callisthenes," *Athenaeum* 66 (1988) 99–120, who sees a different connection between Callisthenes' downfall and a decline in the 'fit' of his work. See too the cautions of M. A. Flower, "Alexander the Great and Panhellenism," in *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* 96–135, at 115–119, on the degree to which the dismissal of Greek troops necessarily altered Alexander's campaign propaganda.

<sup>68</sup> For the trierarchies see n.53 above.

<sup>69</sup> Ps.-Call. 3.17; Jul. Val. 3.15–16 (referring to one "Philon").



*Quomodo adulator*, appears in the accounts of Curtius, Diodorus, and Justin only after the death of Callisthenes; his rise to increased prominence too may reflect the redistribution of power and influence at court, and indeed Plutarch comments explicitly upon such a shift of prestige from Callisthenes to Anaxarchus in the wake of Alexander's murder of Cleitus in 328.<sup>70</sup>

As attractive, then, as the notion of the philosopher martyred for the cause of free speech and liberty may have been to the ancient traditions, Callisthenes ought ultimately to be reckoned another victim of the intrigues of Alexander's courtiers. His resistance to *proskynesis* was not irrelevant to his fate, but it was not the determining factor of it; rather, his refusal of this praxis was seized upon by rivals who were already keen to undermine his standing with the king and to bolster their own positions in doing so. Curtius' assessment of him as a man "in no way suited to a court and the temperament of flatterers" (*haudquaquam aulae et assentantium accommodatus ingenio*, 8.8.22) indeed rings true, if for reasons other than those that Curtius himself highlighted in his narrative of Callisthenes' demise.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 52.7. E. N. Borza, "Anaxarchus and Callisthenes: Academic Intrigue at Alexander's Court," in *Ancient Macedonian Studies ... Edson* 73–86, remains the fundamental treatment of the material on Anaxarchus and Callisthenes. He notes (82–83) the pattern in the mentions of Anaxarchus, but ascribes it to the possibility that Callisthenes in his history suppressed any mention of his rival.

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