

Royal Macedonian Widows: Merry and Not

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FRANZ LEHÁR'S OPERETTA *Die lustig Witwe* debuted in Vienna in December of 1905 and, as *The Merry Widow*, from 1907 on, attracted large audiences in the English-speaking world. It proved an enduring international success, spawning generations of revivals as well as a spin-off ballet, a succession of films, and even a French television series. Lehár's plot was set at a minor European court. It revolved around intrigues aimed at preventing a widow, who had inherited her husband's fortune, from remarrying someone from outside the principality, an eventuality that could somehow lead to financial disaster for the state. After some singing and dancing and a subplot involving more overt (and extra-marital) hanky-panky, love triumphs when the widow reveals that she will lose her fortune if she marries again, thus enabling the lover of her "youth" to marry her without looking like or actually being a fortune hunter.¹

The operetta and especially its film variants depend on the intersection, however coyly displayed, of sex, wealth, and power, and, more specifically, on an understanding of widows, at least young ones, as particularly sexy.² This aspect of the plot was especially apparent in the 1952 Technicolor *Merry Widow* in which Lana Turner, the eponymous widow, wore an equally

¹ On Lehár and the operetta see B. Grun, *Gold and Silver: The Life and Times of Franz Lehár* (New York 1970). The 1861 French play that helped to shape the plot of the operetta was Henri Meilhac's *L'Attaché d'ambassade* (Grun 111–112).

² Grun, *Gold and Silver* 129.

eponymous undergarment: Warner's introduced the commercial version of this type of lingerie two days after the film opened.³ Merry Widow, the corset or more properly the corselet, both covers up and exposes; *Merry Widow* the drama downplays or covers up the machinations surrounding a widow's remarriage and her financial vulnerability, repeatedly hints at her sexual vulnerability, but also portrays her as a romantic figure, living a glamorous life, wearing lovely clothes, living among beautiful people.

Less schmaltzy but more fraught versions of these themes sometimes played out in actual events at the courts of ancient Macedonia, often with two added elements: children (the *Merry Widow* seems not to have any) and violence (no one tries to kill her, even though murdering her would apparently have solved the financial problem). Versions of the operetta's remarriage and inheritance plot, and even (or often) the smarmy treatment of the young widow, recur cross-culturally in literature and sometimes in life.⁴ Concerns about a sexually experienced woman and the children she already had or might have and about inheritance problems (political, symbolic, and financial) attached to her could and did create conflict. Widows, especially those of child-bearing years, who did not remarry or had not yet remarried were difficult to categorize, and when the widow in question was royal (whether a king's widow or the widowed daughter or sister of a king), her widowhood might serve either to stabilize or to threaten the succession.

³ "Store Operations: Cinch Bra Gets Glamour Treatment," *Women's Wear Daily* 84 (1952) 67. The advertising slogan for Warner's campaign promised that its purchasers would be "Naughty but nice." See J. Fields, *An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality* (Berkeley 2007) 151, who connects the attitude toward Lehár's character to "the long-standing Western tradition of ridiculing and conveying ambivalence toward widows" and comments that they had long been seen as a "disruptive force."

⁴ P. Walcott, "On Widows and their Reputation in Antiquity," *SO* 66 (1991) 5–26, stresses concerns about widows' sexuality across cultures, and T. A. McGinn, *Widows and the Patriarchy: Ancient and Modern* (London 2008) 1, notes the common assumption, across cultures, that widows are eager for both sex and wealth.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of the widows of kings and widowed daughters and mothers of kings in Macedonian monarchy. First it reviews what is known about the situation of ordinary widows in the Greek world and then, more specifically, in Macedonia, attempting to determine to what degree the general situation of widows applied to that of royal widows. It also tries to establish whether or not royal widows were independent agents, particularly as to the question of their own remarriages. Next it tries to determine why some royal widows remarried and some did not and why some widows were murdered and others not. Finally, it asks whether the widowhood of kings' wives had a distinctive symbolic weight, different from that of being the widowed mother or widowed daughter, or even the wife, of a living king. To accomplish this final task, it assesses the validity of Daniel Ogden's ideas about the remarriages of royal widows.

Athenian evidence about widows largely derives from the speeches of fifth- and fourth-century orators and consequently relates to the needs of the classes who could afford to hire orators and also reflects the orator's reading of likely jury sentiment.⁵ Athenian women could not own property themselves and remained perpetual legal minors, under the control of a *kuriōs* (legal guardian) who arranged all their marriages. Widows of the upper classes who were still of child-bearing age usually remarried quickly and might not live in the same household with their children from their first marriage. Women of this same general social group, but past child-bearing age, did not remarry (since

⁵ McGinn, *Widows* 6, notes the effects of genre on the representation of widows and how much easier it is to know about representation rather than reality. The famous passage in Pericles' funeral oration (Thuc. 2.45.2) that refers to war widows has been read in so many different ways (e.g. O. Andersen, "The Widows, the City and Thucydides II.45, 2," *SO* 62 [1987] 33–49; L. Kallet-Marx, "Thucydides 2.45.2 and the Status of War Widows in Periclean Athens," in R. M. Rosen et al. [eds.], *Nomodeiktēs: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald* [Ann Arbor 1993] 133–143.; R. I. Winton, "Thucydides 2.35 and 45.2: Against Praise," *JHS* 130 [2010] 153–163) that its relevance as evidence for the actual situation of widows in Athens is uncertain.

the presumed general point of marriage was procreation) but lived in the household of their sons or, failing that, their daughters or other kin. Poorer, perhaps dowry-less, widows, let alone childless widows of any class, could find themselves in desperate circumstance.⁶ Any widow, as witness the experience of Demosthenes' mother, was vulnerable if her *kurios* did not act in her interest. It may well be that *kurioi* often forced widows to remarry, but Demosthenes' mother apparently chose not to and managed to keep that resolve (Dem. 29.26).⁷ One must, however, resist over-generalization; law and practice were not the same thing. As Hunter has shown, Athenian widows could sometimes de facto own or control property and could generate actions within the family that led to the defense of their interests in court.⁸ The relationship between mother and son was idealized (Isae. 11.17), an ideal that served to shore up a widowed mother's position.⁹

Elsewhere in the Greek world, in places where extant information is largely epigraphic, women seem somewhat less circumscribed. In Dorian areas, women could own property and seemed to manage, particularly as widows, greater control over their children and property connected to them, at least until their male children reached adulthood.¹⁰ In Molossia, married

⁶ W. E. Thompson, "Athenian Marriage Patterns: Remarriage," *CSCA* 5 (1972) 211–225.; V. Hunter, "Women's Authority in Classical Athens: The Example of Kleoboule and her Son (Dem. 27–29)," *EchCl* 33 (1989) 43; L.-M. Günther, "Witwen in der griechischen Antike – Zwischen *oikos* und *polis*," *Historia* 42 (1993) 308–325; McGinn, *Widows* 22; R. V. Cudjoe, *The Social and Legal Position of Widows and Orphans in Classical Athens* (Athens 2010) 15–161.

⁷ Andersen, *SO* 62 (1987) 42–44; Hunter, *EchCl* 33 (1989) 39–48; Günther, *Historia* 42 (1993) 308–325. W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece* (London 1972) 108, claims that a woman could choose whether to remarry or not, but Cudjoe, *The Social and Legal Position* 109–111, seems to doubt this, arguing that Demosthenes (27.15, 29.26) is contradictory to this. This issue may have been a question of practice, not law.

⁸ Hunter, *EchCl* 33 (1989) 43–47.

⁹ Hunter, *EchCl* 33 (1989) 39–42.

¹⁰ Günther, *Historia* 42 (1993) 315–316; McGinn, *Widows* 22.

women and widows apparently sometimes acted with legal independence.¹¹ Still, as we will also observe concerning various royal widows, the situations of women superficially in similar circumstance in fact varied dramatically; widowhood was indeed a “highly contextualized” category.¹²

Little information survives about any aspect of the lives of ordinary women in Macedonia before the third century and not much after; opinions have varied about whether this smattering of material justifies the conclusion that Macedonian women had more legal independence and social freedom than some women further south.¹³ Le Bohec-Bouhet, however, has discussed several Macedonian inscriptions (dating from the fourth to the second centuries BCE) which seem to show a woman owning property either on her own or with her children. These inscriptions mention no *kurios* though Le Bohec-Bouhet thinks there may nonetheless have been one. In two cases, the woman in question is referred to as the *γυνή* (woman or wife) not the *χήρα* (widow) of some man, though she plausibly deduces that in both cases these women are nonetheless widows, ones who have not remarried and are acting with their children.¹⁴ This terminology could have been customary and might imply that a widow who

¹¹ D. Harvey, “Those Epirote Women Again (*SEG*, XV, 384),” *CP* 64 (1969) 28; P. Cabanes, *L’Épire de la mort de Pyrrhos à la conquête romaine* (Paris 1976) 407–413, and “Société et institutions dans les monarchies de Grèce septentrionale au IV^e siècle,” *REG* 113 (1980) 324–351, at 329, 333.

¹² McGinn, *Widows* 6.

¹³ Z. Archibald, “‘What female heart can gold despise?’ Women and the Value of Precious Metals in Ancient Macedonia and Neighbouring Regions,” in K. Konuk (ed.), *Stephanèphoros de l’économie antique à l’Asie Mineure: hommages à Raymond Descat* (Bordeaux 2012) 25–30; E. D. Carney, “Macedonian Women,” in J. Roisman et al. (eds.), *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (Malden 2010) 409–427.

¹⁴ S. Le Bohec-Bouhet, “Réflexions sur la place de la femme dans la Macédoine,” in A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets et al. (eds.), *Rois, cités, necropoles: Institutions, rites et monuments en Macédoine* (Athens/Paris 2006) 194–195, for references to these inscriptions.

did not remarry remained in some sense still a wife.¹⁵

One should not, however, exaggerate the difference between Macedonia and Athens. Le Bohec-Bouhet, for instance, also observes that these same Macedonian documents avoid mentioning the personal names of the individual women, much as happened in Athens.¹⁶ Some scholars have suggested that the evolving role of women in Macedonian and Hellenistic monarchy gradually affected non-royal women;¹⁷ of course influence in the reverse direction is also possible. Minimally, the comparative independence of these ordinary Macedonian widows may tell us something about the Macedonian norm, though many royal wives were not themselves Macedonian, and members of royal dynasties were by definition atypical.

The situation of women in the Macedonian elite may, however, be more relevant to that of royal women, particularly since some elite women married kings, but information for this group is also scant. Women in the Macedonian elite, much like their royal counterparts, took part in the political dealings of their families, though they were hardly equal to men.¹⁸ In terms of widowhood, Phila, daughter of Antipater the distinguished diplomat and general, can serve as a model for elite Macedonian widows; she was twice widowed and twice remarried in a period long before her third husband, Demetrius Poliorcetes, took the

¹⁵ Cudjoe, *The Social and Legal Position* 65, discussing Athenian widows, concluded that widows who chose not to remarry and stay in the household of the first marriage “conventionally remained married to their deceased husbands” and thus remained a “wife” till she died, especially if she had sons who remained with her. See below for an apparently similar situation in Macedonia.

¹⁶ Le Bohec-Bouhet, in *Rois, cités, necropoles* 193–196.

¹⁷ Le Bohec-Bouhet, in *Rois, cités, necropoles* 188–196, sees ordinary women as influenced in various ways by royal women. See also M. D. Mirón Pérez, “Las ‘buenas obras’ de las reinas helenísticas: benefactoras y poder político,” *Arenal, Revista de historia de las mujeres* 18 (2011) 273–274.

¹⁸ E. D. Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (Norman 2000) 3–4, 35–36, and in *Companion* 410–415.

royal title.¹⁹ Antipater apparently functioned as Phila's *kurios* for all her marriages: he arranged not only her initial marriage, but two subsequent matches as well, even though she was a mature woman by the time of her last marriage. Each remarriage happened soon after the earlier husband had died. Upon her first marriage, Phila initially remained with her father while her husband went on the Asian campaign and only later joined him in Asia, possibly because of her pregnancy.²⁰ Plutarch asserts that Phila's third and final husband, Demetrius Poliorcetes, did not want to marry her as she was older than he, but ultimately agreed because his own father, Antigonos, desired it for political reasons (*Demetr.* 14.2–3). (Plutarch does not consider Phila's possible preferences.) In fact, it seems likely that though both bride and groom were adults, each simply obeyed the wishes of their respective fathers. About five years after she had married Demetrius, Phila was entrusted with the remains of her second husband, Craterus (Diod. 19.59.3).²¹ It might seem surprising that his remains were given to Phila long after she had married another man, but her son by Craterus was very young at the time and perhaps no other kin of Craterus was available; Phila may have been given Craterus' ashes primarily because she was the mother of his son, not because she was Craterus' widow. Moreover, in light of the subsequent close allegiance of her son by Craterus to the Antigonids, her son was likely brought up in the same household with his half-siblings, thus with Phila. The fact that Phila's father arranged all her marriages seems no

¹⁹ See Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 164–172, for discussion and references, and “The First *basilissa*: Phila, Daughter of Antipater and Wife of Demetrius Poliorcetes,” in G. Tsouvala et al. (eds.), *New Directions in the Study of Women in Antiquity* (Oxford/New York forthcoming).

²⁰ W. Heckel, *Who's Who in the Age of Alexander the Great* (Malden 2006) 207–208.

²¹ Nepos (*Eum.* 4.4), on the other hand, says that Eumenes—presumably soon after Craterus' death—sent his bones to his wife (*uxor*) and children in Macedonia.

different from Athenian practice,²² but Phila's reported role (Diod. 19.59.4–6) as advisor to her father before any of her marriages and after her marriages as a kind of administrator and patron of soldiers and their families (presumably those of her husband) indicates that she was an independent actor in affairs, before she was married, during her marriages, and possibly in her brief widowhoods too.

Let us now turn to royal Macedonian widows. In the Argead period, royal fathers or royal brothers certainly arranged the marriages of unmarried kings' daughters; indeed these marriages sealed alliances that the kings were forming.²³ All these women, however, were likely first-time brides. Though we know of several widows of kings prior to the reign of Alexander, extant information does not permit us to determine who acted as *kurios* for them or if indeed anyone did. For instance, a woman named Cleopatra who had been the wife of Perdiccas II apparently next married Archelaus, her stepson, and had a son by Archelaus (Pl. *Grg.* 471A–C, Aristid. 45.55). Cleopatra herself may have arranged this marriage, as we know some later royal widows did, or Perdiccas II, as some Athenian husbands did, may have

²² If, however, my surmise about the household in which her son by Craterus was brought up is correct, this would be a circumstance not typical in Athens, though not unknown.

²³ Alexander I gave his sister Gygaea to an important Persian official (Hdt. 5.18–21). Perdiccas II gave his sister Stratonice in marriage to Seuthes, nephew of the Odrysian king of Thrace (Thuc. 2.101.6), as part of his negotiated end to the Thracian invasion of Macedonia. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1311b) speaks of Archelaus “giving” his daughters to two important men, despite having promised one of them to another, a former lover who then assassinated him. Philip II arranged his daughter Cleopatra's marriage to her uncle Alexander of Molossia as part of his continuing close ties to that kingdom (Diod. 16.91.4). Demetrius arranged the marriage of his daughter Phila II to Seleucus (Plut. *Demetr.* 31.3–32.3). On marriage alliances see S. Ager, “Symbol and Ceremony: Royal Weddings in the Hellenistic Age,” in A. Erskine et al. (eds.), *The Hellenistic Court: Monarchic Power and Elite Society from Alexander to Cleopatra* (Swansea 2017) 165–188, and E. D. Carney, “Argead Marriage Alliances,” in S. Müller et al. (eds.), *The History of the Argeads: New Perspectives* (Wiesbaden 2017) 139–150.

arranged the marriage before his death, or Archelaus himself may have brought it about.²⁴ It is not clear whether Eurydice, widow of Amyntas III, did remarry (the scholiast on Aeschines 2.29 is the only source that asserts that she did; Justin 7.4.7 says that Eurydice wanted to marry her son-in-law but does not say that she did), but if she did, again we do not know who made the decision about her remarriage: Eurydice herself, her son Alexander II, Pelopidas the Theban leader, her supposed second husband Ptolemy, or even Amyntas III. Whatever the truth about Eurydice's relationship with Ptolemy, we do know that she took independent action in the period after Amyntas' death: when another Argead claimant to the throne threatened to take over the kingdom, she summoned the Athenian admiral Iphicrates and persuaded him to drive out the invader and thus secure the succession for her sons (Aeschin. 2.26–29; see further below).

From the beginning of Alexander's reign in 336 until the Antigonid dynasty was firmly established in Macedonia in the mid-270s, royal widows played a prominent part in public events, for several reasons. There were a number of royal widows around, most notably Olympias (Philip II's widow), her daughter Cleopatra (widow of Alexander of Molossia), Alexander's half-sister Cynnane (widow of Amyntas son of Perdiccas III), Roxane (widow of Alexander), Alexander's half-sister Thessalonice (widow of Cassander), Eurydice (widow of Antipater I), Lysandra (widow of Alexander V, Thessalonice's son), and Arsinoë (widow of Lysimachus). Earlier Macedonian history had been characterized by a plethora of possible claimants to the throne, but after Alexander took the throne, this was no longer true; instead there was a plethora of royal widows.

Alexander's long absence empowered his mother and sisters and his death meant that they also had the potential to contribute to the legitimization of non-Argead rulers. The death rate of generals and kings during the era of the Successors was high, a circumstance that created a number of royal widows and,

²⁴ See further below. On Athenian practice about widows and wills see Cudjoe, *The Social and Legal Position* 59.

even after the end of the Argead dynasty, continued to empower their widows. A number of widowed royal women attempted to arrange their own marriages or those of their daughters. Royal women seem to have controlled considerable wealth;²⁵ this may long have been true, but the circumstances of the era gave new importance to their control of income since their wealth facilitated their independent action. Once, however, the Antigonids were firmly in control, royal women, widows or not, ceased to be prominent in Macedonian public affairs.

Moreover, doubtless out of perceived self-interest, Alexander himself contributed to the new prominence and independence of royal widows, apparently because of his reluctance to press any of his female kin marry or remarry and his willingness to let them make their own decisions. True, at the very beginning of his reign, he did plan to marry Cynnane, his newly widowed half-sister (Alexander had killed her first husband, his cousin Amyntas) to his ally Langarus, but when the prospective groom died suddenly (Arr. 1.5.4), Alexander did not try again, though she would still have been of child-bearing age. Indeed, apart from Alexander's one-time effort with Cynnane, it is not apparent that he acted as *kurios* for either his widowed mother or his widowed full sister and widowed half-sister and perhaps not for any of his sisters. Polyaeus (8.60) says that Cynnane did not want to chance a second marriage, implying both that she preferred not to remarry (and perhaps that she worried about the life expectancy of any prospective groom) and also that she had a choice. Cynnane apparently charted her own course, bringing up her daughter in Illyrian fashion, training her for war. Thesalonice, another of Alexander's half-sisters, reached marriageable age during Alexander's reign, but he did not find her a husband and she apparently remained in the court of Olympias.²⁶

²⁵ Plut. *Alex.* 2.6, 25.4; *FGrHist* 151 F 1; *Syll.*³ 252.56, with n.3; Hyp. *Eux.* 19; Paus. 1.44.5; Ath. 359F; Curt. 7.1.33–37; Polyaeus. 8.60; Arrian *FGrHist* 156 F 9.22). Olympias and Cleopatra acted as grain patrons and Cleopatra sold some of the grain as well (see below).

²⁶ Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 155–156.

Though his full sister Cleopatra was widowed around 334, Alexander evidently felt no need to arrange her remarriage and perhaps neither did Cleopatra, who may have served as regent of Molossia during some of her brother's reign (later Olympias probably succeeded her). Cleopatra's prolonged widowhood gave her considerable freedom of action so long as her brother lived. She and her mother both appeared on lists of those who bought grain from Cyrene (apparently to provide affordable grain for their people in time of shortage). Cleopatra acted as both a grain patron and as a grain broker, possibly in support of Alexander's policy but ostensibly on her own.²⁷ Plutarch disapprovingly recounts a story in which Alexander hears that Cleopatra has taken a young, handsome lover and Alexander, rather than reproving her as Plutarch thinks he should, comments that she ought to get enjoyment out of her *basileia* (*Mor.* 818B–C). Whatever the truth of this anecdote, it imagines (or fantasizes about) Cleopatra as a sexy young widow interested in a younger man (part of the conventional stereotype of the widow) and it certainly pictures Alexander as unconcerned about restoring his sister to a married state.²⁸

Nor did Alexander clearly act as *kurios* for his mother, Olympias, although his relationship with his widowed mother conforms to the sentimental ideal about mother/son relations we first encountered among the Athenians, despite what appears to be her considerable degree of freedom from her son's control. Indeed, in his *Alexander*, Plutarch pictures the king treating his mother and his sister as surprisingly independent agents whose actions he tolerates and/or finds endearing but does not necessarily endorse. Plutarch famously claimed that Alexander did

²⁷ *SEG* IX 2 [Rhodes/Osborne, *GHI* 97]; see E. D. Carney, *Olympias, Mother of Alexander the Great* (London/New York 2006) 51–52, especially nn. 48–52; A. Laronde, *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique* (Paris 1987) 30–34.

²⁸ On Cleopatra's career during the reign of Alexander see Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 85–90, and *Olympias* 42–59. A. Meeus, "Kleopatra and the Diadochoi," in P. Van Nuffelen (ed.), *Faces of Hellenism. Studies in the History of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Leuven 2009) 63–92, deals only with her career after Alexander's death.

not let Olympias engage in military or public affairs (39.7), an assertion that might have surprised Antipater. Later, however, having reported that Olympias and Cleopatra formed a faction against Antipater and divided Alexander's realm, with Olympias taking Molossia and Cleopatra Macedonia, Plutarch has Alexander comment that Olympias' was the better plan, because the Macedonians would not be ruled by a woman (68.3). This anecdote, puzzling on various grounds, pictures Alexander as oddly uninterested in Macedonian affairs but unbothered by his mother and sister's political activism. Arrian (7.12.5–7) describes Olympias relentlessly pursuing an anti-Antipater campaign with her son, one he supposedly initially ignored, but to which he ultimately yielded. Like the anecdote about Cleopatra's affair, these narratives picture the two widows acting independently of Alexander, at least at times; the grain list inscriptions not only portray (possibly falsely) their actions as independent of Alexander, but seem to publicize that independence.

Alexander's unexpected death only increased the prominence of his female relatives, a prominence that may not have been well received, especially among non-Macedonians. The *Liber de Morte*, a document found at the end of extant versions of the *Alexander Romance* and originally a piece of propaganda literature from the era of the Successors,²⁹ envisions a more conventional, Athenian-like role for the women in Alexander's family, at least after his death. Alexander's will, as recounted in the *Liber*, arranged marriages for his widow Roxane and for his sisters (except for Thessalonice), as well as for support for his widowed

²⁹ Opinions vary as to whether we have a relatively exact version of the original pamphlet or whether it was altered over time. For discussion see W. Heckel, *The Last Days and Testament of Alexander the Great* (Stuttgart 1988); E. Baynham, "The Treatment of Olympias in the *Liber de morte Alexandri Magni*: A Rhodian Retirement," in W. Will (ed.), *Alexander der Grosse: Eine Welteroberung und ihr Hintergrund* (Bonn 1998) 103–115; A. B. Bosworth, "Ptolemy and the Will of Alexander," in A. B. Bosworth et al. (eds.), *Alexander in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford 2000) 207–241.

mother and for her retirement on Rhodes.³⁰ I do not mean to suggest that this ‘will’ reflected Alexander’s genuine wishes and certainly not what really happened after his death, but rather that the propagandist imagined conventional arrangements by Alexander for his mother’s upkeep, his wife’s remarriage, and his sisters’ marriages or remarriage, though these fictional arrangements certainly contrasted with Alexander’s lifetime policy in respect to these very women. Intriguingly, his widow Roxane and his widowed mother appear sympathetically, albeit conventionally, in the document.³¹

What actually happened after Alexander’s death differed considerably from the tidy arrangements imagined in the *Liber de Morte*. No one married Roxane or Cleopatra or Cynnane and Olympias did not retire to Rhodes; instead, sooner or later, they were all murdered. Cassander did marry Thessalonice, but that marriage was not part of the plan of the *Liber* (and would hardly have pleased Alexander). Cynnane tried to arrange a marriage for her daughter Adea Eurydice and achieved it, at the expense of her own life (Arr. *FGrHist* 156 F 9.22). Cleopatra and her mother Olympias, either conjointly or separately, involved themselves in various marriage negotiations for Cleopatra’s remarriage, with, according to the sources, mother or daughter sometimes initiating those negotiations and sometimes not. Plutarch (*Eum.* 3.5) speaks of letters Cleopatra sent to Leonnatus asking him to come to Pella in order to marry her. Diodorus (18.23.1–3) mentions Perdicas’ desire to marry Cleopatra (implying that he was the instigator of marriage negotiations), though he had already agreed to marry a daughter of Antipater, and Justin (13.6.4–5) clearly pictures Perdicas initiating negotiations and Olympias simply approving the marriage. Arrian (F 9.21), on the other hand, comments that Olympias, having betrothed Cleopatra to Perdicas, sent her to him. Diodorus

³⁰ Perdicas was meant to marry Roxane, Ptolemy Cleopatra, and Craterus Cynnane.

³¹ See Heckel, *Last Days* 53; Baynham, in *Alexander der Grosse* 107.

(20.34.3–6) says that years later, long after Perdiccas' death, Cleopatra fell out with Antigonus, inclined toward Ptolemy (presumably in terms of marriage) and so tried to reach him by fleeing Sardis; Antigonus had her killed in order to prevent this marriage.³² Diodorus (20.37.4) observes that because of the distinction of her descent, Cassander, Lysimachus, Antigonus, and Ptolemy, and more generally all the important generals courted Cleopatra. Granted that Diodorus (presumably echoing Hieronymus) associated marriage to Cleopatra with *basileia* and rule of Alexander's empire (18.23.3, 20.37.1), the failure of any Successors to marry her demonstrates not her lack of importance, but rather how powerful a symbol she remained, even more than a decade after Alexander's death, when she was surely no longer of childbearing age. Preventing her from marrying a rival was worth the risk of killing her. The involvement of Olympias and Cynnane in their daughters' projected marriages could mean that traditionally mothers were consulted about their daughters' marriage, but were not directly in control so long as their husbands or sons survived.³³ It may, in short, have been a traditional privilege of royal widows without adult sons but possessing marriageable daughters.

In the immediate post-Argead period in Macedonia, some royal widows continued to act independently, about marriage and other issues. Thessalonice, the widow of Cassander, died because one of her sons believed that she somehow favored his brother (Diod. 21.7.1, Just. 16.1.1–4, Paus. 9.7.3). When Lysimachus and/or his last wife Arsinoë had Agathocles, Lysimachus'

³² *Contra* Meeus, in *Faces of Hellenism* 72–78, who denies any agency to Cleopatra and Olympias in this respect, primarily because he seems to assume that the possibility that they initiated any marriage negotiation would indicate Cleopatra's lack of importance. Sometimes those who initiated marriage negotiations were in a weaker position, but sometimes the initiator was the person in the stronger position, for reasons specific to the circumstance, e.g. Seleucus' offer of marriage to Demetrius Poliorcetes' daughter Stratonice (Plut. *Demetr.* 31.3–4).

³³ Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 32.

until-then presumed heir, killed, Agathocles' widow Lysandra fled with her children and other kin to Seleucus and urged him to make war on Lysimachus (Paus. 1.10.4–5). After the death of Lysimachus in Asia Minor, the widowed Arsinoë returned to Macedonia, and controlled the citadel of Cassandreia until, against the objections of her semi-adult son, she herself decided to marry Ptolemy Ceraunus (he was the one who first offered marriage), with disastrous consequences (Just. 17.2.6–11, 24.2.5–9). Two semi-royal widows, Cratesipolis³⁴ and Nicaea,³⁵ both engaged in negotiations about their remarriage. Apart from Nicaea's brief appearance, no royal widow played an independent role in Macedonia once the Antigonids had established themselves.

With one notable exception, patterns of remarriage for royal widows generally resembled those we noted for Athens. Widows past child-bearing or close to that age did not remarry whereas younger royal widows usually did, the marriages sometimes arranged by males, but sometimes, as we have seen, by the widows themselves. Olympias did not remarry, though she may still have been of child-bearing age at the time of Philip's death, but of course her son was an adult. Once a widow, she acted with independence, especially after the death of Alexander. Some of the intense hostility about Olympias preserved in our sources may relate to broader Greek hostility toward older women and perhaps older widows, just as ancient sources stress the beauty, sexuality, and daring of the young widow Cratesipolis (Plut. *Demetr.* 9.3–4, Diod. 19.67.1–2), also in keeping with societal norms.³⁶ Cynanne did not remarry but focused on her daughter's marriage, as we have seen. Thessalonice, past child-bearing

³⁴ Plut. *Demetr.* 9.3–4. See G. H. Macurdy, "The Political Activities and the Name of Cratesipolis," *AJP* 50 (1929) 273–278; D. Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death: The Hellenistic Dynasties* (London 1999) 218, 246, 250; P. Wheatley, "Polioretetes and Cratesipolis: A Note on Plutarch, *Demetr.* 9.5–7," *Antichthon* 38 (2004) 1–9.

³⁵ See Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 188–189, for discussion and references.

³⁶ McGinn, *Widows* 24–25, notes the prejudice against older women but

age, did not remarry. After the deaths of Cassander and his sons, the young widows of the two younger sons experienced quite different fates: one was imprisoned by her father Lysimachus but the other remarried.³⁷ Arsinoë remarried twice, though probably in her mid-thirties at the time of Lysimachus' death. Perseus' widow Laodice may have returned to her home dynasty and probably married again.

The two exceptions to this pattern are Alexander's sister Cleopatra, who did not remarry for the reasons already discussed, and Roxane, Alexander's widow.³⁸ (He in fact had at least one other widow, but his Achaemenid bride or brides were killed soon after his death; see below.) Alexander married Roxane, the daughter of an Afghan chieftain, to gain his assistance in the difficult campaign to conquer the region. Roxane then spent years in obscurity, though her father and male kin certainly profited by her marriage. In the last year of Alexander's life, however, she became pregnant and delivered a son, Alexander IV, a few months after his father's death. Given that Alexander's other two wives were rapidly eliminated and his only other son was by Barsine (whom he had not married and who was not in Babylon at the time of his death), one would expect that one of Alexander's generals would have married Roxane, particularly since none of them was himself an Argead and she was certainly

implausibly denies that it applies to widows. A.-C. Harders, "Königinnen ohne König: Zur Rolle und Bedeutung der Witwen Alexanders im Zeitalter der Diadochen," in H. Hauben et al. (eds.), *The Age of the Successors* (Leuven 2014) 345–377, at 361, notes that if one compares the amazingly favorable treatment of Cratesipolis in extant sources to the hostile treatment of Olympias, though both women were responsible for brutal acts and made decisions some might consider morally dubious, it does appear that age was a factor and that Cratesipolis' beauty and sexuality got her a pass on judgment.

³⁷ Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 159–161.

³⁸ See S. Müller, "Stories of the Persian Bride: Alexander and Roxane," in R. Stoneman et al. (eds.), *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East* (Groningen 2012) 295–310; Harders, in *The Age of the Successors* 345–377; Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 106–107, 146–148; J. L. O'Neil, "Iranian Wives and their Roles in Macedonian Royal Courts," *Prudentia* 34 (2002) 159–177.

still of child-bearing age: but none of them did. Instead, she and her son followed in the train of one regent after another, along with her son's co-king Philip III Arrhidaeus. Antipater brought mother and son to Greece and Macedonia and perhaps at this time Roxane made rich golden offerings to Athena Polias in Athens, still calling herself the "wife (γυνή) of Alexander."³⁹ But her efforts to secure Alexander IV's future ended in failure; Cassander imprisoned her and her son and after some years had both secretly murdered (Diod. 19.105.2–4, Just. 15.2.5, Paus. 9.7.2).

We usually ascribe Roxane's obscurity as a widow to the objections of elite and ordinary Macedonians to her Asian ethnicity and her half-Asian offspring, but this was surely not the only reason for her failure to launch.⁴⁰ Roxane's increasing distance from her own family, her potential network of support, also probably played a factor. The relative lack of distinction of her lineage compared to that of Alexander's two Achaemenid brides likely mattered not only to the Persian elite but quite possibly to their Macedonian opposite numbers; she was not a king's daughter and she was not even Persian but Bactrian. That her

³⁹ *IG II²* 1492.46–54. The date is disputed. P. Themelis, "Macedonian Dedications on the Akropolis," in O. Palagia et al. (eds.), *The Macedonians in Athens 322–229 B.C.* (Oxford 2003) 164–168, favors a date after Alexander's death, perhaps 319/8. E. Kosmetatou, "Roxane's Dedications to Athena Polias," *ZPE* 146 (2004) 75–80, says it could be any time between 327 and 316. D. Mirón Pérez, "Transmitters and Representatives of Power: Royal Women in Ancient Macedonia," *AncSoc* 30 (2000) 35–52, at 45, dates it to Roxane's widowhood and argues that it helped to legitimate her son and publicize her/his Hellenism. She points out that it need not have been made in person. Müller, in *The Alexander Romance* 300, also favors a date after the death of Alexander. Harders, in *The Age of the Successors* 372, believes that the dedication dates to Alexander's reign because Roxane is termed a γυνή, but as we have seen in Macedonia, apparent widows are referred to in the same way. A post-Alexander date is more likely.

⁴⁰ For discussion see S. Müller, "Das symbolische Kapital von Argeadinnen und Frauen der Diadochen," in C. Kunst et al., *Matronage Handlungsstrategien und soziale Netzwerke antiker Herrscherfrauen* (Rahden 2013) 38; Harders, in *The Age of the Successors* 345–377; Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 106–107, 146–148.

pregnancy happened so soon before Alexander's death also weakened her position. Had Alexander lived longer, in the absence of another legitimate son he might well have paid more public attention to her and this in turn might have helped her to establish more lasting connections at court. But at the time of his death Alexander had only recently made his long-delayed but seemingly inevitable Achaemenid marriage—famously hyped by Alexander's Susa display—and doubtless hoped that he would have a son by an Achaemenid woman.⁴¹ Alexander did not know that he was about to die young and, in a world with a high infant mortality, may not have paid much attention to a wife who seemed of modest significance and had not yet borne him a son. If he had known his own death was imminent or if Roxane had produced her son a year or two earlier, her position might have been considerably stronger. Moreover, though virtually all of the Successors tried to manipulate Alexander's memory for their own ends, primarily to construct some sort of legitimacy for their own positions and borrow some of Alexander's glamour, sexual possession of his widow, despite a few Argead precedents (see below), might have seemed a little scary.⁴² Alexander was a frightening man who, even in death, retained a strangle hold on the political imagination of his generation. Roxane did not manage, functionally, to be considered the mother of the king/heir (Olympias, in effect, took over that role), but she was identified as Alexander's wife; it is that position that is celebrated in the

⁴¹ Only Arrian (7.4.4), citing Aristobulus, reports that Alexander married not only the daughter of Darius (Stateira) but also Parysatis, the daughter of Ochus, Darius' predecessor. Nonetheless, his testimony has often been accepted because it makes sense that Alexander wanted a connection to both branches of the Achaemenids (see Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 110, for references).

⁴² Harders, in *The Age of the Successors* 354, observes that the sources sexualize descriptions of Roxane in a way they do not those of other Asian women; descriptions of Darius' wife are, however, certainly sexualized (e.g. Plut. *Alex.* 21.1–5) but those of his daughters are far less so.

Liber de Morte and in the *Alexander Romance*.⁴³ In a sense, it was exactly because she was Alexander's only surviving widow that none of the Successors seems to have developed a serious interest in marrying her.

Many royal widows were killed. For one thing, it was simply easier to kill a widow than it was to kill a king's wife, particularly if she lacked an adult son or brother. Though royal women could play a role in symbolic military leadership, none had long-term control over anything other than garrison troops.⁴⁴ The motivation for the murders was certainly not identical, but a noticeable pattern emerges. Killing a royal widow prevented her from remarrying. Rivals could not use her as a tool to build or legitimate a power base. A dead woman could not claim to be pregnant by a dead king. The latter consideration was surely a factor in the murders of Cleopatra, wife of Philip II, and of Alexander's Achaemenid brides, Parysatis and Stateira, all three of whom were murdered at the behest of other royal women, most likely to insure their own son's succession.⁴⁵ Alexander's sister Cleopatra, though possibly threatened with violence earlier for reasons not necessarily directly connected to remarriage, was actually killed to prevent her from marrying Ptolemy (Diod. 20.37.3–6). True, she was not a literally the widow of a Macedonian king, but, as we have observed, much as her mother seemed to function as king's mother in place of Roxane, so also Cleopatra seemed to replace Roxane functionally as king's widow.⁴⁶ Revenge clearly contributed to some of these murders,

⁴³ Müller, in *Matronage* 345–377.

⁴⁴ E. D. Carney, "Women and Military Leadership in Macedonia," *AncW* 35 (2004) 184–195.

⁴⁵ Plutarch (*Alex.* 77.4) claims that Roxane killed Stateira and her sister Drypetis, with the collusion of Perdikkas, out of jealousy. Harders, in *The Age of the Successors* 363–364, suggests that Perdikkas rather than Roxane must have been the prime agent in their deaths. Ogden, *Polygamy* 47, and Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 110, argue that Plutarch has confused Drypetis with Parysatis and that Parysatis was the actual victim; *contra* M. Rathmann, *Perdikkas zwischen 323 und 320* (Vienna 2005) 30.

⁴⁶ Harders, in *The Age of the Successors* 358–360, stresses the invisibility of

like that of Cleopatra, widow of Philip II, but it is noticeable that some royal widows were killed, whether for vengeance or other reasons, as part of a dynastic unit: probably Cleopatra, the last wife of Philip II, and her baby/ies were killed together and in the broader context of her guardian Attalus' death, whatever the chronological relationship between her death and that of Attalus;⁴⁷ Roxane was killed with Alexander IV and perhaps Barsine with Heracles.⁴⁸ Cassander, and his agents, eliminated Olympias partly out of revenge, but the murder happened primarily because of her continued role as a succession advocate for her grandson. Events after the death of Cassander and his oldest son are murky, but one of Thessalonice's sons murdered her because he perceived her as a succession advocate for his brother more than for himself. These women were killed because others perceived their actions or potential actions as threatening, not simply because they were royal widows, but because their ability to threaten was largely derived from the fact that they had been married to kings.

Still, a surprising number of royal widows were not murdered, though they might easily have been. Perseus' wife went back to her natal family after the Roman conquest and was not imprisoned or killed, despite the fate of her husband and children.⁴⁹ Eurydice, mother of Philip II, survived controversy and dynastic violence and died, apparently, peacefully.⁵⁰ Arsinoë fled to Macedonia after Lysimachus fell in battle and later, though Ptolemy Ceraunus killed two of her sons, he did not kill Arsinoë (Just. 24.3.1–9, Memnon *FGrHist* 434 F 8.7). Lysandra, the

Alexander's widows.

⁴⁷ See Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 72–75.

⁴⁸ Diodorus (20.20.1–2, 20.28.2–4) mentions only Barsine's son Heracles, but Justin (15.2.3) says that Cassander ordered the death of both Heracles and Barsine. P. Wheatley, "The Date of Polyperchon's Invasion of Macedonia and the Murder of Heracles," *Antichthon* 32 (1998)19, doubts Justin and believes that he has confused/conflated Barsine and Roxane.

⁴⁹ Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 195–196.

⁵⁰ Dedications and inscriptions by Eurydice seem to date to the reign of Philip II: Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 44–46.

widow of Agathocles, son of Lysimachus, returned to Seleucid lands (Paus. 1.10.4–5). Phila killed herself (Plut. *Demetr.* 45.1); she was not killed by her husband's enemies. Why did these women survive? Some seem simply to have escaped their enemies. Others survived because they were not perceived as a threat (Laodice), their son or sons protected them (Eurydice and, for a long time, Olympias) and/or because their potential murderers feared offending someone else or desired to ingratiate themselves with an individual or a faction to which they were connected (Ptolemy Ceraunus doubtless feared offending his half-brother and Arsinoë's full brother Ptolemy II; perhaps he also feared the repercussions of murdering his half-sister).

What if we limit ourselves further, ignoring, for the moment, widowed daughters of kings, and focus only on the widows of Macedonian kings? Of course, only a handful of names of royal wives survive. Often we simply do not know what happened to them after their husbands died, and many of them likely predeceased their spouses. Some, as we just observed, were murdered after they became widows. In other cases, king's widows with minor sons remarried, apparently to their son's guardian, often a person closely related to the dead king (including stepsons), but there are very few certain examples of this practice. Archelaus probably married one of his father's wives named Cleopatra and then murdered her son, and may also have had a son by her.⁵¹ Eurydice, widow of Amyntas III and mother of Alexander II, Perdikkas III, and Philip II, may have remarried to her son's guardian, Ptolemy; at the time of this possible remarriage, Eurydice could still have been of childbearing years and two of her sons were not yet adults. Only the scholiast on Aeschines reports this marriage. In any event, though Ptolemy murdered her eldest son (conceivably with Eurydice's assistance or compliance),⁵² her

⁵¹ Pl. *Grg.* 471A–C; Aristid. 45.55; Arist. *Pol.* 1311b15. See Ogden, *Polygamy* 7–11; Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 21–22.

⁵² Just. 7.5.4, schol. Aeschin. 2.29. All other accounts of the death of Alexander II (Diod. 15.71.1, Marsyas *FGrHist* 135–136 F 11, Plut. *Pel.* 27.2) describe it as a male conspiracy and usually name Ptolemy as the head.

second son Alexander II subsequently killed Ptolemy (Diod. 16.2.2), and after that Eurydice did not remarry, though by this point she was likely past child-bearing.⁵³ Lysandra, daughter of Ptolemy and widow of Alexander V, did remarry to Agathocles, a son of Lysimachus and at the time of her marriage Lysimachus' presumed heir (Euseb. *Chron.* 1.232), but she had no children by her first husband and her remarriage would appear to have little to do with her last husband and more to do with her father Ptolemy.⁵⁴ Arsinoë, Lysimachus' widow, chose to marry Ptolemy Ceraunus; she had three young sons by Lysimachus and Ceraunus promised, falsely, to make them heirs, instead murdering two of them (Just. 24.2.1–3.10).⁵⁵ Chryseis, mother of Philip V and almost certainly the widow of Demetrius II, remarried to Antigonus Doseon, who promised to have no sons of his own and have Philip V reign after him.⁵⁶ So to sum up, younger widows of kings with sons, in at least three or perhaps four cases, were married by their husband's successor who acted or promised to act as their sons' guardian; in three cases the new king murdered the sons instead.

⁵³ See C. Mortensen, "Eurydice: Demonic or Devoted Mother?" *AHB* 6 (1992) 156–171; Ogden, *Polygamy* 11–16; Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 40–46; A. Molina Marín, "Reina y madre. Eurídice I y la concepción clánica del poder en Macedonia," in B. Antela Bernárdez et al. (eds.), *Dolor y Placer: las mujeres en la Antigüedad* (Madrid 2018) 75–90; T. Howe, "A Founding Mother? Eurydike I, Philipp I and Macedonian Royal Mythology," in T. Howe et al. (eds.), *Ancient Macedonians in the Greek and Roman Sources* (Swansea 2018) 1–28; E. D. Carney, *Eurydice and the Birth of Macedonian Power* (Oxford 2019). T. Howe, "Cleopatra-Eurydice, Olympias, and a 'Weak' Alexander," in P. Wheatley et al. (eds.), *East and West in the World Empire of Alexander: Essays in Honour of Brian Bosworth* (Oxford 2015) 139–145, has argued that Alexander was contemplating a "levirate marriage" (see below) to Philip II's last wife until Olympias prevented it by murdering her. His argument depends on a series of assumptions about the uncertain and disputed relative and absolute chronology of events after the death of Philip II.

⁵⁴ Ogden, *Polygamy* 59; Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 160–161.

⁵⁵ E. D. Carney, *Arsinoë of Egypt and Macedon* (Oxford 2013) 49–64.

⁵⁶ Ogden, *Polygamy* 179–182; Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 191–195.

In 1999, Daniel Ogden argued that there is a noticeable pattern in these marriages of king's widows to their son's guardians, and he called them "levirate," a term borrowed from Hebrew practice.⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 25:5–10 (also Genesis 38:8) requires a man to marry his brother's widow (*levir* means "husband's brother") if the deceased had no son, in order to father a posthumous son for the dead brother (these marriages also protected the widow). In other words, the purpose of such a marriage in the Bible was to perpetuate the dead man's memory and lineage, not to co-opt it, let alone to slaughter the dead man's progeny. Yet in the Macedonian examples discussed, only the case of Antigonus Doson seems to fit the circumstance and value system of Deuteronomy, if not in a literal sense (Doson was only a cousin of Demetrius II, but his marriage did indeed seem intended to continue the rule of the direct line of Demetrius). The circumstance of Doson's marriage and the mindset of the Antigonid era, however, seem different in a number of respects from our few Argead and subsequent examples.⁵⁸

In more recent years, Ogden has preferred the term "stepmother" marriage in speaking of these distinctive royal marriages, though conceding, as Doson's case demonstrates, that the widow was not always a stepmother.⁵⁹ Ogden offered the following, not mutually exclusive, motives for such marriages: they consolidated a dynasty over-extended by polygamy; marriage to a king's widow somehow legitimated the groom's succession; the groom was able to control the widow, possibly via his guardian-

⁵⁷ Ogden, *Polygamy* ix–x, 9–10, 23–24, and *passim*. Subsequently, D. Ogden, "The Royal Families of Argead Macedon and the Hellenistic World," in B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman World* (Malden 2011) 102, suggested that "we may for convenience call 'stepmother marriage.'" As he notes, some married not literal stepmothers but the widows of earlier kings.

⁵⁸ See Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 191–193.

⁵⁹ Ogden, in *Companion* 94, 102. Ptolemy may or may not have been a son of Amyntas III, so it is unclear whether he married his stepmother; certainly neither Ptolemy Ceraunus nor Antigonus Doson did.

ship of her son/s. The next year, independently of Ogden, Mirón Pérez also discussed, if in much broader terms, the remarriage of royal widows and argued that a “king’s wife became the perpetuator and transmitter of sovereignty.”⁶⁰

The motivation and dynamics of these comparatively rare marriages seem more variable than Ogden recognized. Polygamy appears a significant factor in only two, and only Doso’s consolidated the dynasty. As we have noted, royal women other than king’s widows could contribute to the legitimation of a new ruler, without the need of remarriage. That such marriages enabled the groom to control the widow seems a more convincing point, but in fact that was not always what happened. Roxane spent her entire career as a widow in the control of one general or another, though none of them married her. Assuming for the moment that Ptolemy Alorites did marry Eurydice, the marriage did not stabilize his control of the country or significantly limit Eurydice’s ability to play an independent role (see below). If we accept Anson’s arguments about guardianship,⁶¹ Philip II was probably his nephew Amyntas’ guardian but did not marry Amyntas’ mother. Most of the murders of kings’ sons happened in public and so did not require private access to the stepsons. Ceraunus’ marriage to Arsinoë did seem intended to gain him access to her sons, but not only her sons: he gained access to a citadel as well, much as Demetrius II gained control of Corinth by marrying Nicaea (Plut. *Arat.* 17.2–5, Polyae. 4.6.1). All of the widow marriages, however, whether for control of citadels or persons, reveal how vulnerable king’s widows were, how connected their sexuality and their safety (and that of their children) actually were.⁶²

If not in terms of these “stepmother marriages,” is there any other specific and distinctive significance to the category of royal

⁶⁰ Mirón Pérez, *AncSoc* 30 (2000) 47.

⁶¹ E. M. Anson, “Philip II, Amyntas Perdicca, and Macedonian Royal Succession,” *Historia* 58 (2009) 276–286.

⁶² Carney, *AncW* 35 (2004) 193.

widows, distinguishable from the symbolic weight of all royal women? The importance of this broader category has long been recognized. I have argued that royal women were part of *basileia*, sometimes functioning as the reserve troops of the royal dynasty.⁶³ Mirón Pérez speaks of their share in family charisma.⁶⁴ Sabine Müller has recently applied Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic capital" to analysis of the role of royal women in Macedonian monarchy.⁶⁵

The symbolic weight of these royal women, even if they were widows of kings, did not seem to center on that status. In Macedonia, attention seems to be on kings' mothers even though these mothers might also have been widows. Royal women's benefactions, in the Hellenistic period an increasingly important or at least increasingly attested phenomenon, seemed to focus on food provision and protection of women and families, on what one might describe as motherliness written large.⁶⁶ The most obvious example of this focus is the preference of the Macedonian army for Olympias, mother and grandmother of kings, over Adea Eurydice who was only the wife of a king and the granddaughter of one.⁶⁷ True, we know that the murders of some of these women were used in propaganda aimed against their murderers, but often not because they had been married to a king. For instance, Macedonian troops objected to Cynanne's murder because of her descent, that she was Philip II's daughter,

⁶³ Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 35–37.

⁶⁴ Mirón Pérez, *AncSoc* 30 (2000) 47.

⁶⁵ Müller, in *Matronage* 31–42.

⁶⁶ Mirón Pérez, *Arenal* 18 (2011) 270.

⁶⁷ Müller, in *Matronage* 35, points out that the mother wins this contest. Diodorus (19.11.2–3) explains the preference of the army in terms of the ἄξιωμα (reputation) of Olympias and memory of the benefits Alexander had provided. Justin (14.5.10) refers to the memory of her husband and the greatness of her son. This is not to say that Olympias did not have other advantages. Müller notes (37) that she had a successful son and husband, a long career, a better organized support network, and a daughter whose symbolic value was high.

not because she was the widow of Amyntas.⁶⁸ Thessalonice's son killed her primarily because of the role he believed she was trying to play in the succession. Negative consequences of his action had, however, to do with her descent—that he had killed his mother, the sister of Alexander, not with the fact that she was Cassander's widow. Cleopatra, sister of Alexander and daughter of Philip, mattered because of her descent (Diod. 20.20.4) As Mitchell has noted, going back to archaic times, the right to rule involved heroic descent, as embodied in heroic acts and virtues, and women partook of and could embody these virtues as well.⁶⁹

At the moment, the only direct documentary evidence we have of a possible—and it is only that—reference to a woman as a king's widow is the inscribed mention of Roxane—if we date it after Alexander's death—and there she is called his wife, not his widow.⁷⁰

But there are some other cases where being the widow of a king did signify. Aeschines' story (2.26–29) about Eurydice's advocacy with Iphicrates for her surviving sons, whether or not she had remarried by the time of the incident, depended on her role as royal widow, for she persuaded Iphicrates on the basis of his relationship to her dead husband Amyntas. Nonetheless, her role as mother, in Aeschines and elsewhere, seems to matter more.⁷¹ If Arsinoë had not been Lysimachus' widow, she would not have been able to maneuver for position in Macedonia after his death. Her ability to control citadels after his death gave her a base and one for her sons. She, like Eurydice, was a widow

⁶⁸ Arr. *FGrHist* 156 F 9.23. Polyaeus (8.60) says they were angry because of the murder of Philip's daughter and Alexander's sister; he speaks of her concern that the *genos* (family or clan) of Philip not be removed from rule.

⁶⁹ L. G. Mitchell, "The Women of Ruling Families in Archaic and Classical Greece," *CQ* 62 (2012) 13–16.

⁷⁰ See n.39 above. Mirón Pérez, *Arenal* 18 (2011) 258, comments that the diction could be the sanctuary's, not Roxane's.

⁷¹ Müller, in *Matronage* 34, concludes that in Philip's reign it was her own lineage that signified; certainly the inscriptions in which she appears, probably all dating to the period after her husband's death, employ only her patronymic.

with sons, though whether that or her control of cities and garrisons mattered more (to Ceraunus and others) is difficult to say. Adea Eurydice was both an Argead and the wife of king, but during her very brief widowhood she supposedly played the role of dutiful widow, laying out her husband's body; negative reaction about her death seems to relate to her husband, not to her Argead father or grandfather (Diod. 19.11.5–7). Olympias was able to play a powerful role during her son's reign and after. While Alexander lived, her widowhood seems unimportant; she was able to do what she did because she was Alexander's mother and also because she became the regent of Molossia. Even after Alexander's death, it was her descent that made her nephew, now king of Molossia, support her. However, in Macedonia and among Macedonians, after the death of Alexander her role as both king's widow as well as king's mother (and grandmother) seemed to grow; it was an important part of why the Macedonian army changed sides at Euia, why it was so difficult for Cassander to get her killed (Just. 14.6.8, Diod. 19.51.4). Still, generally, widowhood seems at most a minor aspect compared to descent in terms of the prestige of royal women.

In a Hellenic world where most adult women possessed little or no legal or even functional independence, royal widows sometimes lacked male control or might be perceived or feared to be in danger of lacking it.⁷² The sexuality of the royal widow of child-bearing age may have been a more fundamental issue in events than our extant sources usually allow us to recognize. The only clear example is one of the traditions about Eurydice, in which she betrayed her husband by adultery, attempted to kill him, and then, after his natural death, attempted to kill her sons, all for the sake of her supposed lover and (possibly) second husband (Just. 7.4.7–8, 7.5.4–9). This tradition exemplifies enduring fears about the sexuality and loyalty of widows (would

⁷² McGinn, *Widows* 2, observes that widows, because they fell between chairs so to speak, were often understood as sources of tension and could function as “a lightning rod for praise and blame of women.” The presence of royal power and, often, of succession issues, intensified this tension.

they change their primary allegiance to a new husband or the prospect of one and away from their sons?) and also demonstrates their vulnerability to innuendo.⁷³

The perceived need to remarry widows young enough to bear children probably has a sexual edge as well as the practical ones already discussed. Our sources rarely say so directly. In Homer sexual possession of a widow of a famous warrior is important; indeed it is how the heroes, Greek and Trojan, imagine both victory and defeat.⁷⁴ Empowerment came not just because of sexual possession of the widow of the defeated warrior, but also because possession of a famous warrior's wife passed on some of that warrior's distinction to the new husband since, in a way, his widow had shared it with him. Possibly this too was an element in some of the "stepmother" marriages.⁷⁵ Plutarch mentions Craterus' distinction as one of the reasons Demetrius Poliorcetes married his widow Phila (*Demetr.* 14.2). However, the story of Roxane shows that widow marriage for borrowed glory was hardly a rule, though, as I have argued, that she was Alexander's sexual partner may have been part of the reason no one married her.

Marriage to royal widows, not just kings' widows, did not legitimate a ruler in any absolute sense, though such a marriage, combined with various other actions could work to make a ruler look more legitimate. That certainly was the appeal of marriage to Alexander's sister Cleopatra, though she in fact never married. Royal widows could be both agents and tools of commemoration; commemoration of past rulers could increase the apparent legitimacy of a new ruler.⁷⁶ As bearers of symbolic capital, royal widows sometimes co-opted the past, and at others

⁷³ McGinn, *Widows* 9–10, discusses the general fear; on Eurydice see Mortensen, *AHB* 6 (1992) 156–171; Ogden, *Polygamy* 11–16; Carney, *Women and Monarchy* 40–45.

⁷⁴ See C. Werner, "Wives, Widows and Children: War Victims in *Iliad* Book II," *AntCl* 77 (2008) 1–17.

⁷⁵ Ogden, in *Companion* 102.

⁷⁶ *Contra* Meeus, *Faces of Hellenism* 70, and Mirón Pérez, *AncSoc* 30 (2000) 44–50, both of whom seem to oversimplify.

perpetuated it. Widows were perceived as socially and sexually unstable; when widowhood coincided with the end of one reign and the beginning of another, two different kinds of instability combined, sometimes in explosive ways.

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