

OLYMPIAS AND THE IMAGE OF THE VIRAGO

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SURVIVING SOURCES ON OLYMPIAS, mother of Alexander the Great and wife of Philip II of Macedon, display a level of hostility toward her perhaps equaled only by the source tradition about Cleopatra VII and Clodia. In recent years scholarship has come to terms with the partisanship of ancient treatments of the latter two; scholarly assessment of their careers is no longer synonymous with the judgments of antiquity. The same phenomenon has yet to shape scholarship on the reigns of Philip and Alexander and the period after the death of Alexander the Great. Judgments of Olympias' career and motivation, her role in Macedonian political history, and her public prestige continue to reproduce the views of ancient sources uncritically.

In fact, ancient authors, while generally hostile to Olympias, are not uniformly so. Plutarch, for instance, although he provides an extremely negative picture of Olympias in his life of Alexander (e.g., 2.9, 9.5, 10.1, 4, 68.5), offers a different and much more positive picture of her in the *Moralia* (141b-c, 243d, 799e). Even Justin, notorious for his implausible account of Olympias' supposed outrageous behavior after the death of Philip (9.7.10-14), gives Olympias a long and heroic death scene (14.6.6-13). Diodorus, although generally critical of Olympias, also grants her a noble death (19.51.5). Indeed, female bravery, especially in the face of death, and often characterized as man-like, is admired by many ancient authors.¹

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The following works will be cited by author's surname or indicated abbreviation: H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage* (Munich 1926); E. D. Carney, "Olympias," *AncSoc* 18 (1987) 35-62 = "Olympias"; eadem, "The Sisters of Alexander the Great: Royal Relicts," *Historia* 37 (1988) 385-404 = "Sisters"; R. M. Errington, *A History of Macedonia* (Berkeley 1990) = Errington, *HM*; P. Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley 1990) = AA; N. G. L. Hammond and F. W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia* 3 (Oxford 1988) = Hammond, *HM*; N. G. L. Hammond, *The Macedonian State* (Oxford 1989) = MS; J. Hornblower, *Hieronymus of Cardia* (Oxford 1981); N. Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing A Woman* (Cambridge, Mass. 1987) = TW.

¹On Clodia, see M. Skinner, "Clodia Metelli," *TAPA* 113 (1983) 273-287. On Cleopatra VII, see W. R. Johnson, "'A Quean, A Great Queen?'" *Cleopatra and the Politics of Misrepresentation*, *Arion* 6 (1967) 387-402. References to Olympias in Curtius

Whereas the current historiographical trend in scholarship about the reign of Alexander disdains biography and resists speculation about the motivation of the great conqueror,² most of those who deal with Olympias confidently assign motives to her actions, motives which are usually negative and almost always personal rather than political. The ancient sources, biased or not, are not always the basis for this assignment of motivation. Indeed, unpleasant motivation attributed to Olympias, while similar in ancient sources and modern scholarship, is not identical. Ancient sources tend to depict Olympias as motivated primarily by her difficult personality (they often imply that she liked to make trouble for trouble's sake) and by her natural nastiness, whereas modern scholarship tends to stress vengeance³ and something very close to madness, despite the fact that no ancient source characterizes Olympias' actions as mad and that very little stress is put on vengeance as her motivation. The actions of male contemporaries of Olympias, however brutal, are narrated in neutral fashion and their motivation is not usually pursued, although apparently it is assumed to be rational if ruthless, whereas the actions of Olympias are described with a

are neutral and unrevealing (5.2.22, 9.6.26, 10.5.30); references in Arrian are similar (e.g., 3.6.4, 10.6.1), except for his discussion of Olympias' possible role in Alexander's deteriorating relationship with Antipater (7.12.5-7), which paints a very negative portrait of Olympias (much like that of Plut. Alex. 9.5). It stresses her "difficult" personality and tendency to interfere. Pausanias' allusions to Olympias are uniformly and intensely negative (1.11.4, 25.6; 8.7.5). As yet there is little scholarly analysis of these ancient authors' treatment of women in general or Olympias in particular. See F. Le Corsu, *Plutarque et les femmes dans les vies parallèles* (Paris 1981); J. Heer, *La Personnalité de Pausanias* (Paris 1979) 55-57; M. Casevitz, "La Femme dans l'oeuvre de Diodore de Sicile," in *La Femme dans le monde méditerranéen* (Lyon 1985, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient 10) 1.113-135, especially 122. Some examples of bravery, particularly brave deaths, of women admired in ancient sources: the suicide of Ceteus' wife (Diod. 19.34.5-6); Cleopatra, daughter of Olympias and Philip, defying Antipater (Arrian *FGrHist* 156 F 11.40); Cratesipolis, widow of the assassinated son of Polyperchon, who took over her husband's army and led it with some success (19.67.1-2). At times the sources characterize the bravery they admire as not typical of women or "man-like": Diod. 19.51.5, 67.1-2; Arrian *FGrHist* 156 F 11.40; Justin 14.6.11).

²E.g., A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire. The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1988) xi, "This book is in no sense a biography of Alexander, which I consider undesirable to attempt and impossible to achieve."

³Vengeance was doubtless a common motive for violence in the period of the Successors for both men and women and, of course, ancient morality was more comfortable with it than modern. Many violent acts of the Successors could have been committed in order to avenge real or imagined wrongs, but since many of these acts also had practical benefits for the perpetrators, one cannot be certain, unless, as with Olympias' treatment of Cassander's brothers (Diod. 19.11.8), there is some indication that the perpetrator of the violence announced that the action was taken for revenge. Even then, one cannot assume that Macedonian or Greek reaction to violent vengeance would be identical or even similar to modern reactions.

host of negative adjectives and adverbs and are assumed (although rarely argued) to be emotionally motivated.⁴

Moreover, perhaps because of this unwarranted confidence in ascribing motivation to Olympias, modern scholarship sometimes supplements the already subjective judgments of antiquity. Scenarios and assumptions about Olympias have emerged that have little or no foundation in the ancient evidence. Many, for instance, assume that Olympias and her daughter Cleopatra did not get on and base their explanations for various political events on that assumption, yet no ancient source offers a shred of proof for this assumption.⁵ In fact, several sources describe mother and daughter as acting in concert for shared political goals and several more imply further concerted action.⁶ Similarly, many modern authorities assert that Olympias was universally unpopular in Macedonia after she brought about the deaths of Philip Arrhidaeus and his wife Adeia Eurydice, whereas the narratives of

⁴Hammond (MS 34–35), although sensitive to the hostile tradition about Olympias and inclined to reject most of it, nonetheless refers to Olympias' murders of Philip Arrhidaeus, Adeia Eurydice, and many followers of Cassander as "insane revenge," despite the absence of anything to justify his adjective or even his noun. He speaks (HM 141) of the "savagery" of Olympias and her "cold-blooded murder" of Philip Arrhidaeus, yet a few pages later (HM 143), he refers to Cassander's murder of Aristonous (an action if anything more reprehensible than Olympias' since Aristonous had surrendered to Cassander only on assurance of his personal safety; Diod. 19.50.8) without characterizing it as "cold-blooded" or utilizing any other judgmental term. Similarly, he consistently refers to Olympias' actions as undertaken for the sake of revenge and describes her as "passionate and embittered" (HM 140), but fails to do the same in describing Cassander's similar actions upon his return to Macedonia. Errington (HM 127) also assumes that Olympias' return to Macedonia was revenge-driven and that she was indifferent to any other consideration (cf. HM 128, an apparent contradiction), without any evidence for his certainty in ascribing motivation. He too fails to describe similar actions of Cassander in the same fashion. Green (AA 19) refers to Olympias as "that dreadful, and still dangerous matriarch Olympias, hell-bent on seeing her grandson safely on the throne." Bosworth ([above, n. 2] 27), speaking of Olympias' presumed elimination of Cleopatra and her infant, refers to her as "implacable" and the murders as "barbarously" done, but notes at the same time that Alexander did nothing to protect them and must have found their deaths welcome. He does not characterize Alexander's actions.

⁵See Carney, "Olympias" 36, n. 4, for examples of imaginary scenarios. For further examples: P. Walcot, "Plato's Mother and Other Terrible Women," *G&R* 34 (1987) 12–31, at 20–22. On the absence of evidence for troubles between Olympias and her daughter, see Carney, "Olympias" 53, n. 53, but the view endures: see Hornblower 161–162 and Errington, HM 44–45.

⁶Plutarch (Alex. 68.4) has them forming a faction together against Antipater, with the implication of some kind of arrangement of spheres of influence. After Alexander's death, Olympias sent her daughter to Sardis in an attempt to arrange a marriage with Perdikkas (FGrHist 156 F 9.21). The appearance of both mother and daughter on a list of recipients of grain from Cyrene may also indicate concerted action on their part, perhaps in concert with Alexander; see discussion and references in Carney, "Sisters" 396–397.

Diodorus and Justin provide a more complex and nuanced picture in which Olympias emerges as a controversial figure, loathed by some and loyally supported by others (see below).

This unfortunate state of scholarly affairs has had several consequences, none of them good. If we assume that scholars owe their subjects, groups or individuals, mass phenomena or personalities, some sort of fairness and balanced judgment, then clearly Olympias has not received it. Moreover, because of our unbalanced reading of this particular historical figure, our interpretation of Macedonian political events has been distorted. Distortion is especially a problem with the treatment of the period after the death of Alexander, and with the analysis of the reasons for the collapse of the dynasty which had ruled Macedonia from its historical beginnings.⁷ Problems with the treatment of Olympias' career have also affected our understanding of the most central of Macedonian institutions, the monarchy, and particularly the relationship of female members of the royal family to that institution.

In an attempt to make possible a more balanced analysis of Olympias' career and its impact on Macedonian events and institutions, I shall begin by an examination of the nature and dynamics of ancient and modern bias against her and then turn to analysis of those actions of Olympias that have most seemed to justify hostile modern and ancient treatment of her.

Those who have recognized the hostile treatment of Olympias in the sources have attributed it, following Tarn, to propaganda created by Cassander to justify his elimination of her. While Cassander's efforts did

⁷As noted (above, n. 4) most treatments of the period of Olympias' return to Macedonia and subsequent events assume that her only motivation was vengeance and blame her and her female rival Adea Eurydice for the end of the Argead dynasty (so Errington, *HM* 129; Hammond, *HM* 141; Green, *AA* 19–20). Olympias' policies clearly did not work and may well have caused problems, but blaming her and/or Adea Eurydice for the collapse of the dynasty makes little sense. The basic problem was the absence of a competent adult or near-adult male and this absence was very much Alexander the Great's decision. On nearly every other earlier occasion in Macedonian history, rival branches of the royal dynasty fought it out until one side had eliminated the other. Olympias and Adea Eurydice followed the pattern. The primary motivation for these dynastic internecine struggles was not, typically, revenge but dynastic triumph. That after Alexander III's death there were two kings, neither of them competent, was not a genuine policy but a political fiction (and one not likely to endure: see Hornblower 161; H. D. Westlake, "Eumenes of Cardia," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 37 [1954–55] 309–327 = *id.*, *Essays on the Greek Historians and Greek History* [New York 1969] 313–330, at 326), the consequence of the unexpected behavior of the Macedonian army at the time of Alexander's death. Moralizing about Olympias' behavior has obscured the real historical problems of the period. Did Olympias or Adea Eurydice make the first move to civil war? Why? What was the role of Olympias, once back in Macedonia, particularly in relation to Polyperchon? Why did her faction seemingly fall apart almost as soon as they had gained an initial victory?

doubtless play a part in the attitude of some of the surviving sources, it would be wrong to assume that he was the sole source of the hostility against Olympias.⁸

The image of Olympias created by our sources results from the accumulation of many layers of prejudice. Greek unease with monarchy came partly from the role women played in succession politics; that Macedonian monarchy was polygamous only made for greater unease. A well-known but often carelessly read passage in Plutarch (*Alex.* 9.5) makes clear Greek distrust of Macedonian court politics: "The troubles in Philip's household produced many grounds for quarrels and differences because his marriages and love-affairs contaminated the *basileia* [kingdom or perhaps monarchy] with the customs of the women's quarters." (He follows this remark with an attack on Olympias' ill-nature to which we shall shortly turn.) It is a classic statement of Greek views about women and men and the association of the former with private life and the latter with public life: any mixing of the two worlds will lead to trouble. Hornblower has suggested that the emergence of Macedon as a great power and the consequent appearance for the first time of women like Olympias with political power in the Hellenic as opposed to the non-Hellenic world presented Greek historians with the problem of dealing with a new phenomenon, one they could not ignore.⁹

Naturally, most Greeks disliked the role royal women played in Macedonian public life. In Athens, respectable women were, if possible, not even named in public,¹⁰ yet Athenian politicians refer to Olympias by name in the assembly, without even a patronymic (*Hyp. Eux.* 25; Aeschines 3.233). Shopping trips done for her sake (Aeschines 3.233) and acts of piety she performed (*Hyp. Eux.* 19) became matters of public discussion. She had a long public relationship with the Athenian assembly (*Diod.* 17.108.7, 18.65.1-7; *Hyp. Eux.* 25). Alexander sometimes liked to play the civilized Greek who did not indulge in backward Macedonian ways (e.g., *Plut. Alex.* 51.2). This pose may help to explain anecdotes about him and Olympias in which he takes the role of the conventional Greek male, reproving her for inappropriate behavior, and in one case implying that her actions were more typical of Epirus than Macedon (*Plut. Alex.* 39.12, 68.5; *Diod.* 18.49.4).¹¹ All

⁸W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1948) 2.261-262, followed by J. R. Ellis, *Philip II and Macedonian Imperialism* (London 1976) 22; Hammond, MS 34. A similar but briefer discussion of the reasons for source hostility to Olympias appears in E. D. Carney, "The Politics of Polygamy: Olympias, Alexander, and the Murder of Philip II," *Historia* 41 (1992) 169-189, at 186-189.

⁹Hornblower 226. See W. S. Greenwalt, "Polygamy and Succession in Argead Macedonia," *Arethusa* 22 (1989) 19-43, for a discussion of the role of royal polygamy in succession to the throne in Macedonia.

¹⁰D. Schaps, "The Woman Least Mentioned: Etiquette and Women's Names," *CQ* NS 27 (1977) 323-330.

¹¹The implication may be correct: see Carney, "Olympias" 51, n. 47.

anecdotal material about the early life of Alexander should be treated with great distrust, but, true or not, if these anecdotes were actually generated by Alexander himself, they should be viewed in the context of his desire to be seen as Greek. It is impossible to say whether or not they represent his actual dealings with or feelings for his mother.

Much hostility is specific to Olympias herself: she is treated in a way that neither her daughter nor her rivals are. Some of this difference arises from the sources saying so much more about Olympias than about the others. Her career spanned three reigns and as the mother of Alexander the Great, she became a character in the vast body of anecdote his exploits generated. One wonders whether a lengthy Greek treatment of Cynnane, for instance, might not have demonstrated hostility to her aggressive militarism.¹²

Clearly, though, some of the hostility of the sources to Olympias results from factors more essential than length or breadth of coverage. The sources object to her personality, as they interpret it. Consider the rest of the Plutarch passage just discussed: "the extremely difficult nature of Olympias, a jealous and indignant woman, exaggerated these difficulties because she provoked her son." Numerous anecdotes survive that have made her difficultness proverbial. Alexander jokes that she exacts a high price for his ten-month stay (Arr. 7.12.4). Her quarrels with Hephaestion and with Antipater remain vague, but the idea seems to be that she demonstrates her "difficultness" by involving herself in public affairs, often by unsuccessfully attempting to influence her son.¹³

Since so many scholars have accepted the view of Olympias presented in these stories about her quarrels, it is important to note something at once simple and yet usually ignored: these stories do have a point of view and it is not that of citizens of governments with universal suffrage. The sources assume first that Olympias should not be active in public matters and therefore characterize such activity as interference. In fact we do not know that she was not acting within her role as king's mother; Hammond has suggested that she had a formal constitutional role during Alexander's reign.¹⁴ Even if we reject that suggestion, we might still conclude that her activity was well within Macedonian political patterns, however much Antipater may not have liked it. They assume further that a

¹²Ancient references to Cynnane are so scarce and brief (Polyaenus 8.60; Arrian 1.5.4-5, *FGrHist* 156 F 9.22-23) as to make comparison difficult. Her daughter Adea Eurydice is somewhat better documented (see discussion and references in E. D. Carney, "The Career of Adea Eurydice," *Historia* 36 [1987] 496-502); the sources are uncritical of her opposition to the various *epimeletai* of the kings and her attempts to manipulate the army (Diod. 18.39.1-4; *FGrHist* 156 F 9.31-3; Polyaenus 4.6.4) and, much as with Olympias, admire her bravery in the face of death.

¹³For discussion and references, see Carney, "Olympias" 54-56.

¹⁴N. G. L. Hammond, "Some Macedonian Offices c. 336-309 B.C.," *JHS* 105 (1985) 156-160, at 158-159. See *contra* Carney, "Olympias," and "Sisters" 397.

woman who acts in such a fashion is difficult (χαλεπή), yet the great majority of modern scholars are unlikely to share such an assumption. Moreover, few scholars waste time wondering whether Alexander or Antipater or Attalus was "difficult"; we take it for granted that they were, that competitiveness and assertiveness were norms in the Macedonian court. Without realizing it, we have simply mirrored the cultural judgments of our sources, treated them as somehow facts, instead of relative, culturally-based determinations.

A glance at the etymology of the word "virago" in Latin as well as in English will make my point clearer. In both languages, a virago is a person whose actions conform to cultural expectations of males. In Latin, "virago" is used in a neutral, perhaps one might even say a positive way, to describe women we might term Amazons, women warriors like Camilla.¹⁵ In English, the usage of "virago" is more complex. Originally the same meaning that the term had in Latin was common. For instance, Anne Bradstreet, the seventeenth-century American puritan writer, once referred to Elizabeth I as a "dread virago." One might even call an especially virile male, "macho" by our standards, a "virago." But the *OED* now terms this sort of usage rare. More recently, of course, the term has acquired an entirely different, and much more negative flavor—the scold, the shrew, the woman who nags and pushes¹⁶—and yet the actions the term describes remain the same—things usually done by a man are done instead by a woman. My point here is that the same actions may be seen in a negative or positive or neutral manner, depending upon cultural judgments. The absolute, the action, remains unchanged; it is the interpretation that alters. So Olympias is a genuine virago, a woman who violated every expectation the Greeks had about women, but the antipathy her unconventionality inspired in the Greek world is a cultural assessment, not an eternal truth. Since all the surviving sources for the reign of Alexander date from Roman times and two of them were written in Latin, we should remember that Roman dislike of political women was also intense.¹⁷

Not all the problems with hostility toward Olympias lie in the sources, nor does the nature of the sources explain why they have so frequently been read uncritically. We must recognize the fact that the image of the virago remains an extremely potent one in our own culture and it is very hard

¹⁵In Lewis and Short, "virago" is defined as "man-like, vigorous, a heroic maiden, female warrior, heroine, virago."

¹⁶*The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford 1971) p. 3637, col. 228–229.

¹⁷See T. Hillard, "Republican Politics, Women, and the Evidence," *Helios* 16 (1989) 165–182, especially 177, n. 6, and M. R. Lefkowitz, "Invective Against Women," *Heroines and Hysterics* (London 1981) 32–40. For an example of Greek hostility to female political influence, see Arist. *Pol.* 2.9.7.

to give up a figure we so love to hate. The likes of the traditional figure of Olympias can be found virtually any night on television soap operas, wearing shoulder-pads, scheming, and making the plot go. In the past women so depicted were often royal—Eleanor of Aquitaine for instance¹⁸—because royal women were often the only prominent women and certainly the only ones with a modicum of political power. What we have here is a kind of *topos*, which like many *topoi* continues to have powerful appeal. I shall refrain from considering exactly why we continue to be troubled by the association of women with power and why stereotypes associated with such women persist, but it is essential that we recognize and resist this fatal attraction.¹⁹

Of course, the existence of this *topos* is, in itself, no automatic guarantee or demonstration that the historical Olympias did not actually resemble the stereotype: real people, men and women alike, do act from personal motivation, do take vengeance, and do commit brutal acts. We have good reason to believe that Olympias, whatever her motivation, did indeed commit brutal acts. Granted the multifarious layers of prejudice against Olympias in the sources, is there any way to determine how justified the hostility we have uncovered may be, any way to decide what sort of political figure she was and what motivated her actions? Perhaps. However dubious much of the anecdotal material about Olympias remains, the acts of savagery and murder attributed to her by various sources must be taken more seriously than anecdotal material. Like the anecdotes, but seemingly with more justification, they have often been used to support the conclusion that she was unbalanced, revenge-driven, sadistic.

There are three well-known crimes attributed to Olympias which most have accepted as genuine: the murder of Philip's last wife Cleopatra and

¹⁸M. Meade, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Biography* (New York 1977) discusses similar source problems in her career. Elizabeth I attempted to escape this troubling stereotype by manipulating the public image of her virginity; see C. Levin, "Power, Politics, and Sexuality: Images of Elizabeth I," in J. R. Brink, A. P. Coudert, and M. C. Horowitz (eds.), *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Kirksville, Mo. 1989, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 12) 95–110.

¹⁹Skinner (above, n. 1) suggests that Clodia's sexuality had something to do with hostile reaction to her. This suggestion makes sense for Clodia, but it is probably not the only factor, even for her, and it does not relate to Olympias, whose sexuality is barely referred to in the tradition. Some possibilities are suggested by a general discussion of male perceptions of female political activity in traditional societies in J. F. Colliers, "Women in Politics," in M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds.), *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford 1974) 89–96. For a variety of explanations, see the essays in B. Garlick, S. Dixon, and P. Allen (eds.), *Stereotypes of Women in Power: Historical Perspectives and Revisionist Views* (New York 1992), especially S. Dixon, "The Enduring Theme: Domineering Dowagers and Scheming Concubines" (209–225) and A. Richlin, "Julia's Jokes, Galla Placidia, and the Roman Use of Women as Political Icons" (65–91), which the authors were kind enough to let me read in manuscript.

her baby; the execution of Philip Arrhidaeus and his wife Adea Eurydice; the elimination of many of her political enemies before Cassander's return to Macedonia.²⁰ Let us, then, examine these acts of violence in order to see what they tell us about Olympias, her motivation, and her actions in comparison to those of other members of the Macedonian elite.

The evidence for the first crime is much poorer than for the other two. Only one major Alexander narrative clearly refers to the murder: Justin (9.7.12) reports that Olympias first killed Cleopatra's baby in her lap and then forced Cleopatra to hang herself. Pausanias (8.7.5) recounts a bizarre tale: Olympias supposedly dragged Cleopatra and her infant son over a brazier. Thus the only two sources that testify directly to the murder contradict each other. Plutarch (*Alex.* 10.7) cryptically remarks that Alexander was angry with his mother for having "treated Cleopatra savagely" (ὥμῶς μεταχειρισμένης) in his absence.

Interpretation of these accounts proves difficult: Plutarch's remarks are so ambiguous that it is not clear whether he knows lurid stories like the one repeated in Pausanias, whether his wording constitutes a euphemistic way of referring to the murder itself, or whether he is even aware of the tradition that Olympias murdered Cleopatra. If Plutarch was familiar with accounts of a murder of Cleopatra at the hand of Olympias, his remarks rather peculiarly suggest that Alexander reproved Olympias not for the crime itself but rather for the manner of it. The method reported in Pausanias seems not only bizarre but inefficient; his attribution of the sex of the infant victim does not inspire confidence; and his reputation for accuracy and dependability in historical material is poor.²¹ Justin's account,

²⁰Those who attribute the death of Philip II to Olympias (R. Develin, "The Murder of Philip II," *Antichthon* 15 [1981] 86–99, at 99; R. Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* [London 1974] 22–25; P. Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356–323 B.C.* [Berkeley 1991] 109–110), whether or not they so state, do so in part because of belief in these later crimes, both because the crimes seem to demonstrate Olympias' willingness to murder and because they have been interpreted to characterize a person whose pleasure in inflicting pain may have led her to act against rational self-interest.

²¹On Pausanias' dependability, see discussion and references in C. Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece* (Berkeley 1985, Sather Classical Lectures 50) 95–109. There has been no consensus on Pausanias' sources; Habicht himself (98) believes that Pausanias worked from memory and did not depend on a single source. Although on the whole an apologist for the quality of Pausanias' historical information, Habicht concedes that "there are a number of errors and other shortcomings in his historical narrative" (97). Whatever Pausanias' sources, his information about Olympias (1.11.4, 1.25.6) seems much more hostile than that provided in the narrative of either Justin or Diodorus (see below). Perhaps this hostility derives from Pausanias' condemnation of Philip II and his policies (so Habicht 109) and from what some have viewed as his inclination to blame the decline of Greece (and thus Roman conquest) on Philip and the Macedonians (J. Palm, *Rom, Römertum und Imperium in der griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit* [Lund 1959] 63–74). W. Heckel, "Philip II, Kleopatra and Karanos,"

on the other hand, has one virtue: it resembles Diodorus' description—often taken to derive from the dependable Hieronymus—of Olympias' removal of Adea Eurydice (Diod. 19.11.2–7): forced suicide by hanging.²² The similarity between these two events nearly twenty years apart is striking and lends considerable weight to the testimony of Justin. Both versions of the murder of Cleopatra imply that it happened in private, probably in the women's quarters, so that few would ever have known what really happened, much as in the case of the later murders of Alexander IV and Roxane (Diod. 19.105.2). The differences in the accounts, in addition to the absence of any mention of the incident in the other major narratives of Alexander's reign, must mean that there was no standard account of Cleopatra's death, either because few knew what happened or few considered it important or remarkable.²³ The poor quality of the evidence certainly allows for the conclusion that Olympias did not murder Cleopatra (or that no one knew whether she did or not). There is even the possibility, if no one actually saw the murder take place, that Cleopatra killed her child and herself in despair. But the similarity of Justin's account to Diodorus' description of the death of Adea Eurydice makes it more likely than not that Olympias did indeed kill Cleopatra, and in the manner described by Justin. Neither author appears aware of the version of these crimes described by the other; so a doublet seems unlikely. I shall return to the problem of whether both authors' narratives are shaped by broad cultural expectations about the deaths of women, especially royal women. For the moment, let us limit ourselves to the conclusion that Olympias, with or without Alexander's approval, probably murdered mother and baby.

Was political murder unusual in Macedonia? Absolutely not. Can we conclude that Olympias' action was any more ruthless, vicious, or vengeful than some actions of her son or some of his generals? Probably not. Cassander murdered both of Alexander's sons, as well as Roxane, Alexander's first wife (Diod. 19.105.2), and Alcetas, brother of Perdiccas, murdered Cynnane (Arrian *FGrHist* 156 F 9.22–23). Antigonus had Cleopatra the daughter of Olympias killed (Diod. 20.37.5–6), and, of course, Alexander had Parmenion murdered (Curt. 7.2.11 ff.; Arr. 3.26.3; Diod. 17.80.1–4; Plut. *Alex.* 49; Justin 12.5.3). A Macedonian assembly had Perdiccas' sister Atalante, among many others, killed (Diod. 18.37.2). Men, women, and

RFIC 107 (1979) 385–393, which argues that Cleopatra had only one child, a son, has won general acceptance, *contra* R. K. Unz, "Alexander's Brothers?," *JHS* 105 (1985) 171–174.

²² As noted by Tarn (above, n. 8) 261–262.

²³ The conflicting accounts of Cleopatra's demise resemble a similar source conflict about the death of Callisthenes: see Arr. 4.14.3; Plut. *Alex.* 55.8, and discussion in J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch, Alexander: A Commentary* (Oxford 1969) 156.

children were cut down, sometimes with the appearance of a trial, more often not.

Is the murder of Cleopatra different from those mentioned because it was unnecessary, as some have judged?²⁴ What exactly is meant by this judgment is never quite clear, but there it seems to be assumed that the other murders, however ruthless, were pragmatic, necessary to the continued success or survival of the murderer, whereas the murder of Cleopatra and her child could serve no pragmatic purpose because mother and child could not constitute a threat to Olympias. Such assumptions may well be the result of the common tendency to assume that women's actions are privately motivated (e.g., Olympias does this only and purely for revenge) and men's publicly inspired and thus somehow excusable, or at least rational.²⁵

While we have no way of determining Olympias' real motivation, her crime had obvious and very practical benefits to her. Attalus had already demonstrated his eagerness to make use of a male baby, if that is what Cleopatra had. Even if, as is more probable, the baby Olympias eliminated was a girl, Olympias was unlikely to assume that a royal daughter or royal wife could cause no trouble—it would be like underestimating herself. The subsequent careers of Cynnane and Adea Eurydice demonstrate the kind of trouble Cleopatra could have caused, had she lived: she had the potential, using her daughter, to threaten Alexander's line, just as Adea Eurydice later actually did. True, Cleopatra was not an Argead, but then neither was Olympias; how Cleopatra's daughter might have fared in competition with other potential Argead brides like Thessalonice or Adea Eurydice is difficult to say, particularly because of our ignorance of Attalus' background and connections prior to Cleopatra's marriage. Certainly Cleopatra and her family had already shown themselves an immediate threat, and yet one easily eliminated by destroying the consequences of Cleopatra's marriage, whereas Thessalonice was apparently already in Olympias' control and Olympias is unlikely to have viewed Cynnane and her young daughter as problems until Cynnane's husband became a menace to her son.²⁶

²⁴W. Heckel, "Philip and Olympias 337/6 B.C.," in G. S. Shrimpton and D. J. McCargar (eds.), *Classical Contributions: Studies in Honour of Malcolm Francis McGregor* (Locust Valley, N.Y. 1981) 51–57, at 57, states explicitly that it was an "unnecessary act," while other scholars imply that it was by referring to it as revenge. S. M. Burstein, "The Tomb of Philip II and the Succession of Alexander the Great," *EMC/CV* 26 (1982) 141–163, at 160–161, argues that Cleopatra "posed no danger" to Alexander and could have been used as a hostage.

²⁵Colliers (above, n. 19) 91.

²⁶For Cynnane, see W. Heckel, "Kynnane the Illyrian," *RivStorAnt* 13–14 (1983–84) 193–200. See also Carney, "Sisters" 392–394; Berve 2.229; G. H. Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens* (Baltimore 1932) 48–52. For Adea Eurydice, see Carney (above, n. 12) 496–502. On Thessalonice, see Carney, "Sisters" 386–392. For Attalus and Amyntas, see Berve 94 and 30–31. The date and order of events in the period immediately after Philip's murder

Olympias' crime most resembles the elimination of Stateira, the daughter of Darius, whom Alexander had also married, by his first wife Roxane and Perdikkas (Plut. *Alex.* 77.6). These crimes are the female versions of the deaths of Amyntas or Attalus, as ordered by Alexander.²⁷ (In fact, whatever he did or did not say in public, Alexander may have found his mother's elimination of Cleopatra convenient, or indeed may have ordered it himself.)²⁸ Thus the murder of Cleopatra and her child conforms to the general pattern of dynastic murder in Macedonia: elimination of relatives and heirs of those directly involved in opposition at the same time when major figures are removed (often the beginning of a new reign), a tying up of loose dynastic ends.²⁹ The benefits conferred on the murderers are obvious; whether motives other than these (e.g., revenge or sadistic pleasure) motivated Olympias or any of the others is impossible to demonstrate: no more or less evidence exists for her motivation than for that of any of the others.

Perhaps there are other unstated assumptions behind the typical view of this incident: one suspects Cleopatra is usually pictured as an innocent. Perhaps she was, but Plutarch (*Alex.* 10.5) does say that she and Attalus planned the gang-rape of Pausanias together. Most of the other royal Macedonian women we know about were quite tough, even when very young; whether or not Plutarch's tale is true, we need not assume that Cleopatra was without guile; the traditional image of Anne Boleyn might be useful to recall.

Was Olympias' murder of the baby particularly reprehensible by the standards of fourth-century Greece and Macedonia, as it is by ours? Cassander's murders of Alexander IV and Heracles, both young boys at the times of their deaths,³⁰ may have been more offensive to ancient sensibilities than the death of a female infant. I do not mean to suggest that ancient

are controversial. While the sources imply that Cleopatra was murdered soon after Philip's death (Diod. 17.2.3; Justin 9.7.2; Paus. 8.8.7), J. R. Ellis, "The Assassination of Philip II," in H. J. Dell (ed.), *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (Thessalonica 1981) 99-137, at 122-123, has argued unconvincingly that she died later, after the death of Attalus, which he also puts some months after the death of Philip. See Burstein (above, n. 24) 159-160, for a similar later dating of the death of Attalus.

²⁷See J. R. Ellis, "The First Months of Alexander's Reign," in B. Barr-Sharrar and E. N. Borza (eds.), *Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Times* (Washington 1982) 69-73, for references to these events. Clearly the circumstances of each succession vary, but the parallels are real.

²⁸So E. Badian, "The Death of Philip," *Phoenix* 17 (1963) 244-250, at 249 and Bosworth (above, n. 2) 27.

²⁹See, for instance, J. R. Ellis, "The Step-Brothers of Philip II," *Historia* 22 (1973) 350-354, for Philip's troubles with other Argead claimants.

³⁰See discussion and references for their deaths in W. L. Adams, "Cassander, Alexander IV, and the Tombs at Vergina," *AncW* 22 (1991) 29-30.

Greeks were indifferent to the fates of very young children, even baby girls, but rather that, because deaths in infancy or early childhood were so common, they were more inured to them and more pragmatic about them. It is difficult to read the practice of child exposure in any other way. Children were often killed almost automatically when their families or parents were murdered, perhaps because society saw children less as individuals and more as extensions of their parents and families.³¹ Plutarch's failure to mention the baby at all—if he is indeed referring to the murder of Cleopatra—is suggestive: this death is just not as important. Justin's account seems to stress the horror for Cleopatra having the baby killed in front of her more than the fact that it was killed.³²

In the end, condemnations of the murder of Cleopatra and her baby seem to derive from the expectation that Olympias should have been nice and obviously was not, whereas no one bothers to condemn the equally ruthless and brutal actions of male Macedonians because no one expects them to be nice. Antigonos had Antigenes, commander of the Silver Shields, burned alive in a pit, yet Diodorus (19.44.1) passes over this event, at least as nasty as anything Olympias is said to have done, with absolutely no comment, even though Antigenes' death is merely the most lurid of many murders Antigonos ordered in the same time period. His crimes have certainly not led to a particularly negative treatment of Antigonos in modern scholarship, as Olympias' somewhat similar actions have done.³³

³¹See M. Golden, "Did the Ancients Care when their Children Died?," *G&R* 35 (1988) 152–163 and J. Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York 1988) 3–51, especially 40. For an example of children being killed with their parents, see Plutarch *Agis and Cleom.* 38.5. The *Metz Epitome* (P. Thomas [ed.], *Incerti auctoris epitome rerum gestarum Alexandri Magni e Codice Mettensi* [Leipzig 1966] 70) reports that after the death of a son born to Alexander and Roxane, the child was *re divina facta*; it is difficult to know what value to assign this testimony, which in any event refers to the death of a sole heir to the throne as opposed to the death of a female non-heir when an adult male heir was available.

³²Boswell ([above, n. 31] 165–167) notes that ancient sources refer to the suffering of the *parents* rather than the children when parents were forced to abandon them. Determination of this issue clearly relates to differing views of when infants or children could be seen as individuals.

³³R. A. Billows, *Antigonos the One-Eyed and the Creation of the Hellenistic State* (Berkeley 1990, *Hellenistic Culture and Society* 4) 3, offers a characterization of the scholarly portrait of Antigonos which, while hardly a ringing endorsement, fails to employ the kind of strong language used about Olympias. Particularly striking is the absence of reference to atrocities. Elsewhere, Billows notes (11) that Antigonos was "at times ruthless and harsh, but being harsh and ruthless was inherent in the career of command he followed and the times in which he lived . . .," and adds "... mostly when Antigonos was ruthless it was a matter of policy rather than personal spite." Atrocity for impersonal reasons is somehow preferable. It is exactly this assumption—reasons of policy justify brutality or at least make it respectable—, absent for no obvious reason

The evidence for the later savage acts attributed to Olympias is better than that for the murder of Cleopatra, primarily because these later acts have a share in the major political events of the period. Diodorus recounts the ill-treatment of Philip Arrhidaeus and Adea Eurydice and their murders by Olympias (Diod. 19.11.2–7) and follows it by an account of Olympias' murder of Cassander's brother Nicanor, her desecration of the tomb of another brother, Iollas (the supposed poisoner of Alexander), and her elimination of a hundred other Macedonian supporters of Cassander (19.11.8–9). Pausanias (1.11.3–4) and Justin (14.5.1–10) preserve similar, although much briefer and even more highly colored accounts of these events.³⁴

Hieronymus, generally considered dependable, is usually assumed to be Diodorus' source here.³⁵ This particular passage does not, however, inspire confidence: its treatment of these crimes is highly rhetorical and moralistic and suggests a dangerous fondness for *peripeteia*. Diodorus says that Olympias, after having captured both husband and wife, "did not carry her good fortune as a human being should" (19.11.4) but put them under guard and maltreated them, by walling them up and supplying them with food through a hole (19.11.5). He reports that, when this treatment caused the Macedonians to pity the royal pair and look with disfavor on Olympias, she had Philip Arrhidaeus stabbed to death, but treated Adea Eurydice differently. To her she gave the choice of a sword, the noose, or hemlock. (Aelian *VH* 13.36., without mentioning Philip Arrhidaeus or the manner of his death, also tells the story of Adea Eurydice's choice of suicide methods.) Diodorus supposes that the different manner of Adea Eurydice's death was a consequence of Olympias' greater hostility to her, a point to which we will return later. He comments that Olympias' treatment of her rival "neither displayed any respect for the former dignity of the victim whom she was unlawfully treating, nor was she moved to pity for the fate common to all.

from judgments of Olympias, which has led to so many negative comments. Billows is certainly right to assert that "the other Diadochoi were no better." See Billows (above) 11, n. 3, for a useful list of nasty acts done by various other Successors.

Diodorus' view is implied by his treatment of another violent act of Antigonus: he observes that unholy acts are advantageous to rulers because of the power they possess, but dangerous for private individuals (19.48.4). He simply accepts such actions from male rulers and seems to assume that they are natural to their situation. Obviously this differs from his treatment of Olympias.

³⁴See above, n. 21. Pausanias (1.11.3), apparently referring to the period when Alexander was still alive, attributes Olympias' departure from Macedonia to her *fear* of Antipater, something unlikely to have been the case during Alexander's lifetime. Pausanias (1.11.4) explicitly states that Olympias got what she deserved when Cassander killed her, whereas Diodorus only implies this. Justin (14.5.1–5) recounts what might almost be described as a battle of the sexes.

³⁵On Hieronymus' dependability, see T. S. Brown, "Hieronymus of Cardia," *AHR* 52 (1946–47) 684–696 and Hornblower 18–75.

Accordingly, when she herself met with a similar reversal, she experienced a death that was worthy of her cruelty."³⁶ Diodorus concludes this episode with an account of the final defiance, bravery, and devotion of Adea Eurydice. His point is clear: this episode justifies Cassander's subsequent murder of Olympias—she got what she deserved. He follows this episode with the vengeance Olympias takes on the living and dead brothers of Cassander and the killing of a hundred of Cassander's followers (again described in vivid terms). Once more, Diodorus cannot resist moralizing—"By glutting her rage with such atrocities, she soon caused many of the Macedonians to hate her ruthlessness"—and notes that she made them remember Antipater's death-bed warning never to let a woman be first in the kingdom (Diod. 19.11.8–9).

This is a fascinating passage, worthy of much more discussion than it has so far had. The account of Adea Eurydice's death, much of it detail unlikely to have been known by any except the victim herself, makes, as Brown has remarked, "good theater but suspect . . . history."³⁷ What is particularly striking is how much the narrative insists on placing Olympias' various actions in the context of justification for her own murder. (Whereas Diodorus never quite makes this point directly, Pausanias [1.11.4], apparently using the same source, does so explicitly.) Why this should be so is not immediately apparent. Hieronymus, Diodorus' supposed source, has an excellent reputation. Moreover, Hieronymus, granted his ties to Eumenes, the long-time friend and ally of Olympias, had no obvious reason to be hostile to Olympias. Anson has suggested that Hieronymus blamed Olympias' poor strategy for Eumenes' death, but this suggestion suffers from various difficulties.³⁸ Hieronymus cannot have been an eye-witness to these events and may have been affected by the views of his source or sources, who would have been either former supporters of Olympias or perhaps loyal followers of Philip Arrhidaeus and Adea Eurydice captured at the same time.³⁹

³⁶Translations from Diodorus are taken from R. M. Geer, *Diodorus of Sicily* (Cambridge, Mass. 1962, Loeb Classical Library) vol. 9.

³⁷Brown (above, n. 35) 689. Hornblower (121) exhibits similar skepticism and attributes the passage to court gossip. She suggests that Hieronymus, Diodorus' source, may have added the reference to the presence of a servant (Diod. 19.11.7) in order to give the appearance of truth by fabricating an eye-witness to a tale difficult to substantiate.

³⁸Edward Anson made this suggestion as commentator on an earlier, oral version of this paper. The chronology of events it assumes is tight but possible. His suggestion depends, however, in good part on Hieronymus' presumed views at a much later time when he composed his works, and the date of composition is much disputed.

³⁹Hieronymus was in Asia (Diod. 19.44.3). Hornblower (122) suggests that, even for events he did not personally witness like the death of Adea Eurydice, Hieronymus would have had access to much primary material and that his informants could have included those of the Successors who were his friends, members of their entourages, and Macedonians who changed sides thanks to the fluctuating fortunes of generals during

A more plausible possibility is that the source of much of the moralizing here is not Hieronymus at all, but Diodorus himself. While Diodorus does seem to have used a dominant source, he does a great deal of rewriting and the tone of this passage suggests his own less than certain hand, perhaps aided by some source more racy than Hieronymus.⁴⁰ We should especially distrust the story of Antipater's death-bed warning. Antipater is certainly a plausible choice for such a remark—his quarrels with Olympias are better known, though he had similar problems with Adea Eurydice (Diod. 18.39.2–4; *FGrHist* 156 F 11.42, 44) and with Olympias' daughter Cleopatra (*FGrHist* 156 F 11.40)—but the point here seems to be that Olympias' actions are a cautionary tale about women and power and what happens if they get it. In other words, while the Diodorus passage may reflect the prejudices and passions of the factions of the late fourth century, it also and perhaps primarily reflects more general Greek views about women and political activity.

What, granted the patent problems with the surviving evidence, should we conclude about Olympias' actions in this period? It seems safe to assume that she did have both husband and wife killed, perhaps in different fashions, and that she did indeed have a large number of Cassander's followers killed, if not the nice round figure of one hundred. Perhaps because of the emphasis and tone of the Diodorus passage (as well as the even more tendentious versions of Pausanias and Justin), it has generally been assumed that Olympias proceeded in the fashion described out of sheer savagery, unrestrained and sadistic desire for revenge against those she blamed for the death of her son.⁴¹

the wars of the Successors, when victors often incorporated the armies of the defeated into their own.

⁴⁰K. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton 1990) 107, stresses Diodorus' tendency to supplement and highlight his material whenever a possibility for moralizing is present. Westlake ([above, n. 7] 314) insists that Hieronymus himself was not much given to passing moral judgments. If Diodorus did use another source, Duris is an obvious possibility. R. B. Kebric, *In the Shadow of Macedon, Duris of Samos* (Wiesbaden 1977) 21, notes that Duris, like Pausanias, blamed the Macedonians and Philip for Greek weakness; this hostility may have affected his view of Olympias too. Kebric also hypothesizes (30) that Duris may have taken the old-fashioned view that the gods punish those guilty of excess, a view also demonstrated by this passage. Kebric does, however, note (66) that even so sober an historian as Hieronymus could occasionally be mistaken for the more histrionic Duris.

⁴¹Hammond characterizes her actions as "insane revenge" (*MS* 34) and as "cruel revenge" (*HM* 140). Errington (*HM* 127) says "her driving motive was revenge" and blames the end of the Argeads on her deeds (see above, nn. 3, 4, and 7). Diodorus (19.11.9) says that Olympias claimed that she killed one of Cassander's brothers and desecrated the grave of another because she sought to avenge Alexander's death. She did not, apparently, make any such claim about the hundred others, nor about Adea Eurydice and Philip Arrhidaeus. Clearly all these deaths had possible future benefit to her as well.

Did Olympias have any legitimate authority to kill Adea Eurydice, Philip Arrhidaeus, or the others? Did she violate law by killing them without, apparently, a trial?⁴² These questions are difficult to answer for two reasons: fundamental scholarly disagreement about the nature of the Macedonian political system and uncertainty about Olympias' official position in various stages of her life. Some scholars of ancient Macedonia, the "constitutionalists," believe that Macedonia was governed by well-defined traditions, that power was distributed to various groups, and that the king had overall responsibility for this system. Others, among whom I count myself, believe that Macedonia was defined by the kingship and that the king's power was limited only by his circumstances.⁴³ The king's role and power in terms of trials is particularly difficult to establish; clearly a tradition involving groups of Macedonians in capital trials existed but was not always followed. Whether or not a king had a legitimate right to kill someone summarily, kings sometimes did so. Because of this the ruler might suffer political repercussions, but we do not hear that such action caused a constitutional crisis.⁴⁴

Was Olympias in a position to hold a trial at the time Adea Eurydice, Philip Arrhidaeus, and the others came into her hands? While there is no evidence that Olympias held any particular office during the reign of her son, there is evidence that she did after his death. (It would be wrong, however, to consider any office she held as the primary source of her power; office or title might bring official legitimacy, but her power derived from her role as the wife of Philip and mother of Alexander; see, e.g., Diod. 19.11.2.) After Polyperchon became *epimeletes* (guardian or manager of the kings), he offered the *epimeleia* of her grandson to Olympias and she ultimately accepted his offer, in effect, to split the *epimeleia* of the two kings between them (Diod. 18.49.4, 57.2, 65.1; Diodorus' initial description of Polyperchon's offer also mentions *prostasia*, a term whose meaning and nature remains vague.)⁴⁵

⁴²Lindsay Adams, in private conversation, has pointed out that when Cassander had Olympias eliminated, he at least turned to the procedure of a trial, whereas Olympias did not. Hammond (*HM* 140, n. 3) believes that Olympias got the assembly to condemn the anonymous one hundred supporters of Cassander whom she killed, but there is no evidence that she did this before their deaths or those of the royal pair.

⁴³See E. N. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus: The Emergence of Macedon* (Princeton 1990) 231–248, for a lucid exposition of the two different interpretations of the Macedonian political system and also for his convincing arguments in favor of an anti-constitutionalist position.

⁴⁴Alexander did not try Parmenion, but did try his son. See Borza's discussion ([above, n. 43] 246–247) on the evidence for the necessity of trials and for the king's role in them.

⁴⁵Hammond, as we have seen (above, n. 14), believes that Olympias held the *prostasia* during Alexander's reign and that it was a real office, involving non-military duties

Those who held the *epimeleia* ruled for the king, and thus could surely have held trials; Olympias, however, was probably the first woman in Macedonia to hold the *epimeleia*. Women were, of course, excluded from direct participation in trials in Athens, but are unlikely to have been in Macedonia.⁴⁶ Thus it is probable that Olympias' position would have enabled her to conduct a trial, but that she chose not to for much the same reason that Alexander preferred not to try Parmenion: neither could be sure of conviction of his/her enemy and so they preferred a more private and certain solution. Diodorus employs (19.11.9) the term *paranomema* (an act contrary to law or tradition) to characterize her actions, thus confirming that expectations of a trial existed and were not met. She acted, as her son had done, contrary to tradition; whether they acted illegally is difficult to say. Certainly, Olympias' actions were not without precedent.

Let us assume for the moment that Olympias had some rational motivation for her actions and consider what it might have been. Diodorus mentions not only the execution but the maltreatment of the royal pair: they are walled up in a small space and fed through a hole (Diod. 19.11.4). Olympias' unpleasant treatment of the two has been termed "torture," despite the absence of terminology in any ancient source to justify such diction. Again, the usual assumption is that Olympias simply took pleasure in their discomfort and Diodorus' narrative supports this in the sense that he offers no explanation for her actions, but we need not concur. Philotas really was tortured prior to his execution, but of course our sources assume that Alexander and his associates had a reason for their actions:

like religious ritual and administration of the king's personal wealth. Curiously, he does not believe that Olympias held this "office" when she returned to Macedonia with Polyperchon. There is no evidence that the *prostasia* existed prior to Alexander's death (so R. M. Errington, "From Babylon to Triparadeisos: 323–320 B.C.," *JHS* 90 [1970] 49–77, at 55–56 and E. Badian, "The Struggle for the Succession to Alexander the Great," *Studies in Greek and Roman History* [Oxford 1964] 262–270, at 264–267) and none that Olympias held it during this period. Rather than a genuine office with defined duties, it seems to have been a more general term, meant primarily to be honorific. E. M. Anson, "Craterus and the *Prostasia*," *CP* 87 (1992) 38–43, has recently argued that *prostasia* and *epimeleia* referred to the same thing, the office of the regency or guardianship, but that *prostasia* was the actual title of the office, whereas *epimeleia*, at least initially, was a more generic term rather than a genuine title. Anson's arguments, although interesting, do not convince, particularly in respect to Olympias. *Inter alia*, Diodorus' initial reference to Polyperchon's offer to Olympias (18.49.4) mentions both terms in the same passage and yet does not treat them as synonymous.

⁴⁶W. L. Adams, "The Dynamics of Internal Macedonian Politics in the Time of Cassander," *Ἀρχαία Μακεδονία* 3 (1977, publ. 1983) 17–30, at 22, n. 23, suggests that the reason Cassander did not allow Olympias to be present at her own trial may have been a prohibition similar to the Athenian one. Granted the prominence and public role of many royal Macedonian women in the period, this is unlikely.

they wanted Philotas to incriminate himself and others, particularly his father.⁴⁷ In short the torturers hoped that torture would produce an admission or admissions useful to them. Why suppose differently of Olympias, particularly since what she does to the royal pair suggests not so much a desire to inflict pain (she certainly could have done much nastier things to them) as a desire to make them so uncomfortable that they would be willing to do what she wanted? What she would have wanted is obvious, granted that Philip Arrhidaeus had been recognized as king and his wife may have had some quasi-official guardianship role:⁴⁸ a formal abdication. Indeed, the blatantly partisan treatment of these events in all our surviving sources may result not from moral objections to Olympias' actions in themselves, but from the fact that they were directed by a mere woman at a king, however incompetent.⁴⁹ Obviously she did not get what she may have wanted.

The elimination of large numbers of Cassander's prominent followers has also usually been assumed to have no motivation other than revenge, and yet here again there are other possibilities. When Olympias returned to Macedonia after her long sojourn in her homeland, she was by the standards of her age an old woman who had already long outlived the average life expectancy for women of her day.⁵⁰ She could appear in front of an army, as she apparently did with great effect on the day the Macedonian army deserted Adea Eurydice and went over to her without a fight (Diod. 19.11.2; Justin 14.5.5), but she could not really lead an army because she lacked the military training that her rival Adea Eurydice had received. This was a critical problem in the period after Alexander's death, when victory in battle determined everything. We have no way of knowing exactly what

⁴⁷Curt. 6.11.10–38; Plut. *Alex.* 49.11; Diod. 17.80.2. As Hamilton ([above, n. 23] 136–137) remarks, the probable reality of the torture is considerable, particularly because torture was also reportedly used against the “pages” and Callisthenes (Arr. 4.14.3).

⁴⁸On Adea Eurydice's role, see Hammond, *HM* 139.

⁴⁹We often tend to underestimate Macedonian respect for kingship in general and the nearly sacred quality of Argead rule in particular. The insistence of the troops on the accession of Arrhidaeus, the reaction of the troops to the murder of Cynnane and their demand for the marriage of Adea Eurydice to Philip Arrhidaeus all suggest how considerable that loyalty might be. Olympias as murderer or executioner of a reigning king may have precipitated very strong feelings not because of the justice or lack of it in her ruthless acts but because they were directed at a king.

⁵⁰On the life expectancy of Greek women, see S. B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1975) 68, nn. 39 and 40, for discussion and references. See especially J. L. Angel, “Paleoecology, Paleodemography, and Health,” *9th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences*, Aug. 28–Sept. 8, 1973 (Chicago and Detroit). Despite differences in estimates of life expectancy, Olympias' age far surpasses any of the various estimates. Arguably Argeads by blood or marriage would have had a much lower life expectancy than the population in general, thanks to the frequency of murder and assassination.

motivated her return—certainly her earlier hesitancy (Diod. 18.49.4, 57.2) to return suggests that she was aware of the risk such an action involved—but it seems reasonable to conclude that she hoped to insure the throne of Macedonia for Alexander IV and to enjoy whatever predominance she could before he came of age or she died. The absence of Cassander must have seemed providential and whatever her assessment of the relative skills of Polyperchon and Aeacides, her protectors, as opposed to those of her enemy Cassander, her slaughter of Cassander's followers is an obvious attempt to obliterate a faction, a preemptive strike before the return of the leader.

The attempt back-fired, of course. Olympias miscalculated Macedonian sentiment, just as Adea Eurydice had recently done and as Cassander nearly did in later murdering Olympias (Diod. 19.11.2; 19.51.1–6). Macedonian sentiment in the period of the decline of the Argeads was quite changeable and easy to misjudge (Diod. 19.51.3). The narrative of Diodorus, rather than suggesting that Cassander was, at this moment, more popular than Olympias, shows the Macedonians attempting to choose sides on the basis of which faction seemed likely to win, but tending to hold out for Olympias until it was apparent Cassander had succeeded. The narrative pictures Cassander proceeding very gingerly because of his fear of Olympias' support. Olympias' slaughter of the supporters of Cassander, as well as other violent acts, Diodorus reports to have caused her unpopularity (Diod. 19.11.9; Justin 14.5.10), but, nonetheless, the only people Cassander found willing to kill her were the relatives of those she had herself killed (Diod. 19.51.1–6). Thus, Diodorus' narrative, rather than demonstrating Olympias' pervasive and universal unpopularity in Macedonia, reflects the sense that she was a controversial figure in Macedonia, sometimes hated, sometimes loved, sometimes followed with great loyalty, sometimes abandoned, and that these abrupt changes in public opinion arose sometimes from moral condemnation of her crimes, but more often from the perception that she could not defeat Cassander.⁵¹

One reason that she was not regarded universally as a moral horror is that her crimes, rather than being somehow exceptional, as modern scholarship

⁵¹At 19.35.2, we learn that the Aetolians, wishing to please Olympias and Polyperchon, tried to prevent the passage of Cassander; at 35.4, we learn that Olympias had a number of people with her; at 35.5, it becomes clear that only *after* the Epirotes had allied with Cassander did people throughout Macedonia who had previously held apart from Cassander abandon Olympias in despair (obviously implying that they would have preferred not to) and that Polyperchon's troops had to be bribed to desert (35.6). When the siege of Pydna proves disastrous, soldiers beg Olympias to let them go and she does (presumably this means that they did not want simply to desert; 19.50.1); Cassander displays these "deserters," hoping to spread news of her weakness, and thus to make her supporters despair, and his ploy works (50.2–3), although even then Monimus and Aristonous hold out and Aristonous surrenders only when ordered by Olympias (50.3, 7–8).

so often implies, were of a type common in this violent and unstable period. Her elimination of the "hundred" followers of Cassander was comparable to other atrocities of the period ordered by various Macedonian generals. Shortly after Olympias' death, in an action very similar to hers against the faction of Cassander, a general of Cassander's took the opportunity of the absence of Polyperchon's son and general to burn five hundred of Polyperchon's Argive supporters alive and had others killed too (Diod. 19.63.2). Perdikkas had thirty or three hundred—depending on the reading of the text—of Meleager's supporters trampled to death by elephants (Curt. 10.9.11–18).⁵² The assembly outlawed and condemned to death more than fifty followers of Perdikkas (Diod. 18.37.2; Arr. *FGrHist* 156 F 1.30, 39). Certainly her actions were brutal, but that does not mean that they were either exceptional or without political motivation. Surviving ancient sources may judge Olympias more harshly than some of her contemporaries not only because she was a woman, and because one of her victims was an Argead and a reigning king but also because her atrocities were committed in Macedonia itself, whereas most of the others took place in Asia. She brought the ferocity of the Asian wars home.⁵³

Part of the difficulty in comparing Olympias' actions to those of her male contemporaries is that our sources are fascinated by her actions and recount them in vivid if not highly dependable detail, but they are not equally intrigued by the crimes of men and often fail to provide the kind of detail which could make comparison more meaningful. Diodorus tells us how Antigonos tried to escape the blame for the murder of Alexander's sister Cleopatra, but never mentions exactly how she was killed (20.37.5–6). He also explains how Cassander attempted to escape the blame for the murders of Alexander IV and his mother but leaves undescribed the manner of their deaths (Diod. 19.105.2; Pausanias [9.7.2] does say that they were poisoned). Arrian (*FGrHist* 156 F 9.22–23) reports the fact of the murder of Cynnane, rather than its manner. Yet all these crimes, like those attributed to Olympias, were considered particularly offensive (thus the first two refer to concealment and the third precipitated a mutiny). We do not have the evidence to demonstrate that Olympias was sadistic or not or even to show whether taking pleasure in the violent elimination of one's enemies was an unusual thing for a Macedonian to do. Her crimes generally seem typical of the court and the time.

⁵² All manuscripts read "CCC," but E. Heidecke, *Q. Curtii Rufi Historiarum Alexandri Magni Macedonis* (Leipzig 1908), following Bentley, reads "XXX," as does J. C. Rolfe, *Quintus Curtius* (Cambridge, Mass. 1962, Loeb Classical Library). H. Bardon, *Quinte-Curce* (Paris 1965, Budé edition), however, rejects the emendation and accepts the reading "CCC," as do J. Yardley and W. Heckel in their translation and brief commentary on Curtius *The History of Alexander* (Harmondsworth 1984).

⁵³ Hammond, *HM* 141.

Thus, analysis of Olympias' most notorious actions has so far demonstrated that she was at least as ruthless and brutal as prominent males in the Macedonian court but has left unresolved the question of whether she was more savage—more irrational, vengeful, and sadistic—than her male contemporaries, primarily because this determination depends in good part on questions of motivation. Let us now return to one curious and largely unnoticed aspect of two of the murders attributed to her. As we have seen, Justin (9.7.12), in his account of her destruction of Cleopatra, and Diodorus (19.11.5–7) and Aelian (*VH* 13.36), in their account of the death of Adea Eurydice, report that Olympias forced these royal women to kill themselves. Justin simply says that Olympias forced Cleopatra to hang herself but Diodorus and Aelian provide a more complex picture: Olympias offers Adea Eurydice the choice of sword, noose, or hemlock and she chooses the noose, hanging herself with her own girdle. As I have already argued, the similarity of these accounts (unnoted by the ancient authors) seems to confirm the authenticity of each, but may actually signify both more and less than this.

Why did Olympias force these women to kill themselves rather than simply having them killed? What significance should we attach to the fact that both deaths are by hanging? We seem to have here an example either of life imitating art or art life: worse yet, we may have an example of both at once. Suicide, particularly suicide by hanging, often with the woman's own girdle, is the classic way women, usually royal women, die in Greek tragedy, and to some degree, in classical literature in general.⁵⁴ It is a death appropriate to their gender, a death occurring in private, although revealed to the public, a death chosen by women in desperate and often humiliating circumstance. Nicole Loraux has suggested that a hanging death, however loathsome Greek sources sometimes consider it (e.g., *Od.* 22.462–464), was seen to be appropriate to women, especially married women.⁵⁵ Whereas men in the Roman world might choose suicide as the honorable course in inescapable disaster and be admired rather than condemned, in the Greek world, men were generally expected to endure, rather than yield to disaster. Male exceptions typically disposed of themselves by masculine means, with a sharp blade. Thus, in an Hellenic context, suicide in general, and hanging in particular, was a womanish death.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Macurdy ([above, n. 26] 52) noted the similarity of Adea Eurydice's death to that of Antigone. See discussions in Loraux, *TW*; Pomeroy (above, n. 50) 101; A. J. L. van Hooft, *From Autothanasia to Suicide: Self-Killing in Classical Antiquity* (London 1990) 21; K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Berkeley 1974) 101.

⁵⁵Loraux, *TW* 4.

⁵⁶This statement represents the views of Loraux, *TW* 4. B. Knox, "Attic Nights," *New York Review of Books* (April 28, 1988) 13–14, offers some useful qualifications

Could it be an admirable death, at least for a woman? This is a difficult question in the context of a culture so segregated by gender. Are we, for instance, to admire the courage of Jocasta or Antigone? The suicide of Phaedra is even more problematic. In a culture that found it hard to admire much about women, it is difficult to assert with certainty that suicide was morally admirable for women, but certainly it was less dishonorable for a woman than for a man.⁵⁷

But what is the significance of *forced* suicide, both for the person who orders it and for the person compelled to enact it? Roman examples come

to Loraux's generalizations; none of his remarks (which, like Loraux's, deal only with tragedy) compromise the association she makes between women and suicide, and especially women and suicide by the noose. Evidence from non-tragic sources tends, as we have seen, to confirm this association. Other writers on suicide do not stress gender differences as Loraux does and tend to suggest that Greek attitudes toward male suicide were not as universally negative as Loraux asserts. Their discussions, however, suggest a more negative view of male suicide than they seem to recognize: see Dover (above, n. 54) 166–169, 237–242; R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1985) 96–99; van Hooff (above, n. 54) 21–53. E. P. Garrison, "Attitudes toward Suicide in Ancient Greece," *TAPA* 121 (1991) 1–34, while containing much useful discussion and bibliography, does not entirely persuade when she argues that Greek attitudes to suicide were primarily situational. She does not address the role of gender in such attitudes; she focuses on treatment of the corpse of the dead to the exclusion of much other relevant material; and she does not compare Greek to Roman attitudes. While a monolithic attitude about suicide for all periods and all areas of the Greek world is at best a useful fiction, clearly many cultures took a more positive view of the action, at least in certain circumstances, than did Greek culture.

⁵⁷On this point, see N. Loraux, "La Gloire et la mort d'une femme," *Sorcières* 18 (1979) 51–57, which argues that a woman's suicide, particularly Phaedra's, could be glorious, and *TW* 8, where she is more ambivalent; Garland ([above, n. 56] 96), who believes that it could be glorious; so also H. King, "Bound to Bleed: Artemis and Greek Women," in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (Detroit 1983) 109–127, at 119. The question is complicated by the frequency of hanging as the choice of women; as we have seen, Homer terms it impure (*Od.* 22.462–464) and there is a similar passage in Euripides (*Helen* 298–303). Granted the physical consequences of death by hanging, judging it impure is hardly surprising. Yet suicides by hanging are so thoroughly associated with women that one suspects a connection: perhaps women, who always bleed and are thus regularly polluted, seem appropriate for a polluted death. Another and not necessarily mutually exclusive alternative: Greek ideas about women's physical nature, the movement of the womb, marriage and death, strangulation as a way to avoid rape, and strangulation as a bloodless death as opposed to the male death with blood may all be related: see King (above, 119–121) and Loraux, *TW* 50–61. Most often, the woman hangs herself with her own girdle or sash, just as Adea Eurydice does. This choice is no accident but also speaks to connections between a woman's essential nature and her choice of means of suicide. King notes (120–121) that a woman's girdle reflects all the stages in her life: the first, put on at puberty and dedicated to Artemis as marriage rites begin; a special girdle untied for the marriage night; the untying of the girdle for childbirth. See also Loraux, *TW* 10. For those female suicides precipitated by rape, the texts suggest that the act of suicide is more obviously admirable.

first to mind: emperors commanding their enemies and supposed enemies to kill themselves (e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 15.70–71, 16.17). While literary tradition generally treats such forced suicides quite favorably, here again we confront the great difference between Roman and Greek views on the morality of suicide. But there are certainly Greek examples; somewhat surprisingly, here too the treatment of those who suffer this fate is quite positive, even admiring. Death by self-administered hemlock (one of the rejected options of Adea Eurydice) somehow became one of the various forms of capital punishment in Athens by the end of the fifth century, perhaps because of a reluctance to execute by the shedding of blood, perhaps for technological reasons. More intriguing are passages which suggest that suicide under compulsion is preferable to public execution. In Euripides' *Orestes* (1060–64), when the Argive assembly votes to stone Orestes and Electra to death, Orestes persuades them to let him and his sister kill themselves and the messenger calls for a rope and a sword (gender once more determining the means of death).⁵⁸

Even more fascinating, and much more apposite for Olympias' treatment of her two rivals, is a passage in Plutarch's *Mulierum virtutes* (*Mor.* 253c–d) which tells the story of the fate of the women of the family of a vicious tyrant. When the tyrant Aristodemus is finally killed, the victorious mob besieges his house and his wife shuts herself in her chamber and hangs herself. Megisto, a brave woman who has done much to bring about the fall of the tyrant, does not save the two virgin daughters of the tyrant—as a

⁵⁸On forced suicide, see van Hooff (above, n. 54) 94–96; N. Loraux, "Le Corps étranglé. Quelques faits et beaucoup de représentations," in *Du Châtiment dans la cité: Supplices corporels et peine de mort dans le monde antique* (Paris 1984, CEFR 79) 195–218, which discusses hanging and strangulation as forms of capital punishment; and Garrison (above, n. 58) 8–9, especially n. 25, who terms it "institutional suicide." Forced suicide blurs the distinction between suicide and imposed death, in itself an indication that those choosing to inflict this form of punishment may respect the individual upon whom it is imposed, or at least the status of the individual. Van Hooff (95–96), for instance, points to freedom of choice of methods as a positive indication (*contra* Garrison, 8, n. 25). The suicide of Alcetas (18.46.7) would seem to confirm this interpretation. Van Hooff notes the great predominance of Roman over Greek examples. On forced suicide, particularly the use of hemlock, as a means of avoiding shedding of blood, see L. Gernet, "La Droit pénal de la Grèce ancienne," in *Du Châtiment ...* (above) 10–35, at 27 and R. J. Bonner and G. Smith, *The Administration of Justice from Homer to Aristotle* (New York 1970) 2.284–285. Loraux (*op. cit.* 199) suggests that hanging may have been a form of execution in Macedonia, although not as common as lapidation. Two other factors may relate to the use of forced suicide as a means of execution. One is simply technology: if Greek penology generally resisted the shedding of blood, then few alternative means existed. The second and probably more important determinative: in a sense, what a ruler or state did by forcing suicide was to insist on recognition of the kind of situation that often drove individuals acting independently to choose suicide: dishonor. It is interesting to note that Johnson ([above, n. 1] 393) considers the death of Cleopatra the Great "in effect forced suicide."

modern reader might expect her to—but rather saves them from rape and slaughter at the hands of the crowd; out of respect for Megisto they are allowed to kill themselves. Thus the sisters die at home, in their own quarters, by hanging themselves by their own girdles, after uttering the usual noble sentiments. Plutarch very explicitly praises the εὐγένεια (nobility, good breeding) of these young women.⁵⁹ Another Plutarch life includes similar scenes involving members of the royal family of Sparta (*Agis and Cleom.* 20.1–7, 38.4–9).⁶⁰ Is the detailed description of the death of Adea Eurydice in Diodorus and the brief description in Justin of Cleopatra's end, history, "tragic history,"⁶¹ or pure fiction, the consequence of certain preconceptions about appropriate deaths for royal women? I wish I knew. The forced suicides of Adea Eurydice and Cleopatra certainly do not resemble most accounts of the way Macedonians executed men: our sources preserve various methods for the capital punishment or murder of men, but they are largely violent, often involving sharp blades, as in the case of Adea Eurydice's husband.⁶² Apparently the deaths of royal Macedonian women often occurred in private, unlike the public deaths of men; it may have been considered more appropriate for a woman to kill another woman than for a man to do so.⁶³ There is even the example of Phila, daughter of Antipater and wife of Demetrius, who poisoned herself rather than face disaster and endure, as her husband chose to; here life truly appears to have imitated

⁵⁹See the discussion of this passage in P. Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods: An Analysis of the Mulierum virtutes* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965) 84–88. Stadter suggests that the source of this passage is Phylarchus, famous for his death scenes and generally viewed as a typical writer of "tragic history." King ([above, n. 57] 121) points out that in this case, too, the young girls avoid rape by hanging themselves.

⁶⁰Stadter ([above, n. 59] 86) believes Phylarchus to be the source for these anecdotes as well. All the narratives mentioned share a concern for the proper disposal of the dead, ever a woman's duty, and for maintaining spirit, defiance, and modesty even in death. In most there is some ultimate defiant and yet noble statement. Many of these features recur in Justin's description of Olympias' death (14.6.10–12), which, in Justin's account, takes on something like the aspect of a forced suicide.

⁶¹On the vexed question of the nature and origin of "tragic history," see F. W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley 1972, Sather Classical Lectures 42) 34–38.

⁶²Despite Loraux ([above, n. 58] 199), even if hanging was occasionally a form of execution in Macedonia, it would have been, for men, a humiliating one. The difficulty in distinguishing literature and history in this particular case derives in part from the nature of evidence preserved from the Greek world, much of which is mythic or literary, but some examples, like that currently considered, have the appearance of being historical.

⁶³Thus, while Antigonus ordered the murder of Cleopatra the daughter of Olympias, he had women carry it out and subsequently blamed the murder on them (Diod. 20.37.3). The implication would seem to be that she was killed not in private, but in the women's quarters. Roxane, with the connivance of Perdikkas, had Stateira and her sister murdered and the bodies concealed (Plut. *Alex.* 77.6). Olympias' murder of Philip's wife Cleopatra and her baby may be another example of this phenomenon. A private death of a woman in a sense implies women as the immediate agents of crime.

art.⁶⁴ Since we cannot be certain that historical royal death in Macedonia did not replicate its literary image, we cannot reject Diodorus' vivid account of the deaths of Adea Eurydice and her husband out of hand, but we should exercise great caution in accepting it, especially its "tragic" details.

If, then, we grudgingly accept Diodorus, what do the very different deaths he says Olympias arranged for husband and wife tell us, particularly about Olympias' motivation? Diodorus thinks that the death allotted to Adea Eurydice was a greater punishment than that given to Philip Arrhidaeus (19.11.5) because she was claiming that the *basileia* belonged to herself, rather than to Olympias (19.11.5). In short, he attributes the distinction in means of death to Olympias' perception of Adea Eurydice as her real rival, rather than the less-than-competent Philip Arrhidaeus, but he assumes that her death is the worse one. As the Plutarch and Euripides passages have implied, he is more likely to have been right about Olympias' reading of Adea Eurydice's motivation than about Olympias' intention in distinguishing the deaths of husband and wife. Greek literary tradition indicates that Olympias allowed Adea Eurydice the sort of death honorable for a royal woman and further honored her status and royal birth by giving her a selection of methods. This need not mean that Olympias liked or respected either of her female victims as individuals or that she did not respect her male royal victim, but simply that she gave them the deaths that convention dictated, recognizing the status she shared with them if not their individual worth.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Plut. *Demetr.* 45.1. This incident so closely resembles Greek expectations about the behavior of men and women and seems so much in conflict with the rest of Phila's career (see C. Wehrli, "Phila, fille d'Antipatre et épouse de Demetrius, roi des macédoniens," *Historia* 13 [1964] 140–146), that perhaps it should be treated with some suspicion. On the other hand, contrary to the expectation that the male should endure rather than kill himself, Alcetas, the brother of Perdiccas, knowing that he was about to be betrayed and turned over to his enemies, killed himself rather than endure coming into their power (Diod. 18.46.7).

⁶⁵See E. D. Carney, "The Female Burial in Tomb II at Vergina," *AncW* 22 (1991) 17–26, at 19–20, for an understanding of why Olympias' treatment of Adea Eurydice's death may be relevant to arguments about the identity of those buried in the royal tombs. J. Musgrave, "Dust and Damn'd Oblivion: A Study of Cremation," *BSA* 85 (1990) 271–299, at 276, has argued that the remains of the man and woman in Tomb II must have been cremated soon after death and yet the man and woman seem to have been cremated with splendid grave goods which were removed at the last minute. He argues that such circumstances make it impossible to identify these remains as those of Adea Eurydice and Philip Arrhidaeus. Such a grand burial by a murderer of her victims might seem improbable, but Diodorus (20.37.3) says that the murderer of Cleopatra, Antigonus, buried her "royally" and, as Adams has noted ([above, n. 30] 30), Cassander seems to have done something very similar with the remains of Alexander IV, if indeed the young king's remains are those in Tomb III at Vergina, as is generally supposed. The reader should note that my earlier article, not yet taking into account the significance of the forced suicide of Adea Eurydice, tended to doubt the possibility that Olympias

Olympias' most brutal acts, whatever their motivation, rather than being peculiarly barbarous, resembled those of male contemporaries. The unusual opprobrium that surrounds them derives, primarily, from the fact that a woman committed them. We have given up moralizing about Alexander and resist speculating about his motivation. It is time to do the same about Olympias: we have more reason. So little evidence about the ambitions and desires of ancient women survives, let alone about those of specific women, that certainty about women's motivation is particularly dubious. It is time to recognize the witchy, bitchy caricature of Olympias we have inherited from antiquity as the antique it is and put it where it belongs—in the attic. We know that she was as ruthless as many of the Successors; it is possible that she was nastier, but it is more likely that she evoked more fear and horror because she was a woman.

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would have buried her victims at all, let alone splendidly (Carney, *op. cit.* 20). That both Diodorus (19.52.5) and Diyllus (*apud* Ath. 4.155a) report that Cassander buried the royal pair, as well as Cynnane, at Aegae does not tell us what had happened to their bodies in the interval. Cynnane, who had died in Asia a number of years earlier, must have been cremated, enabling her daughter to bring her ashes home. In some sense, the burial Cassander gave her at Aegae had to be a re-burial, and the same could easily be true of the other two. Indeed, since both Diodorus and Diyllus employ the verb *θάπτω*, which can signify either the physical act of burial or the ritual, the funeral, associated with burial, both passages could mean that it was Cassander who performed the ritual in the traditional royal burial place, not that the bodies had previously been unburied. Thus we cannot rule out the possibility that Olympias buried her victims, possibly quite respectably, but not at Aegae.