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REVIEW ARTICLE: RECENT TRAVELS IN ALEXANDERLAND

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Abstract: This review of recent books about Alexander the Great and related topics focuses in particular on how much attention scholars have paid to the eastern aspects of the history and historiography of the period. It traces the identification of Alexander as an essentially 'western' figure back to the period of the Enlightenment, and shows how the work of scholars in the 18th century set the terms of the subsequent debate. It goes on to show how work on the *Alexander Romance* displays a far broader and inclusive range of intellectual approaches than traditional Alexander historiography, and suggests that the study of the historical Alexander would benefit from seeing Alexander as belonging in a Near Eastern context as well as a Greek or Macedonian one.

Keywords: Alexander the Great, Macedonia, Historiography, *Alexander Romance*, Enlightenment

ALONSO TRONCOSO (V.) and ANSON (E.) *Eds* **After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochi (323-281 BC)**. Oxford: Oxbow, 2013. Pp. x + 277. £36. 9781842175125.

ANSON (E.) **Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues**. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. Pp. xiii + 226. £19.99. 9781441193797.

BRIANT (P.) **Alexandre des lumières: Fragments d'histoire européenne** (NRF essais). Paris: Gallimard, 2012. Pp. 739. Illus. €29. 9782070131716.

DE SANCTIS (G.), BERTI (M.) and COSTA (V.) **Filippo e Alessandro: dal regno macedone alla monarchia universale: Lezioni universitarie 1949-1950** (Ricerche di filologia, letteratura e storia 13). Tivoli: Tored, 2011. Pp. xxvi + 323. €40. 9788888617459.

DE SANCTIS (G.), LANZILLOTTA (E.) and OTTONE (G.) **L'impresa del Grande Alessandro: Corso di storia greca anno academico 1947-1948** (Ricerche di filologia, letteratura e storia 9). Tivoli: Tored, 2010. Pp. xxiv + 230. €30. 9788888617336.

MARTIN (T.) and BLACKWELL (C.) **Alexander the Great: The Story of an Ancient Life**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 193. £16.99. 9780521148443.

STONEMAN (R.), ERICKSON (K.) and NETTON (I.) *Eds* **The *Alexander Romance* in Persia and the East** (Ancient Narrative Supplementum 15). Groningen: Barkhuis, 2012. Pp. xv + 416. €90. 9789491431043.

STROPPINI DE FOCARA (G.) **D'Alexandre à Jésus: De la grandeur profane à la grandeur sacrée** (La main d'Athéna). Paris: Orizons Editions, 2013. Pp. 142. €14. 9782296088641.

In November 2001, in what Mary Beard described more recently as 'a review that has become famous among ancient historians for calling attention to the very sorry state of the professional "Alexander industry"',[1] James Davidson wrote this:

> In Alexanderland scholarship remains largely untouched by the influences which have transformed history and classics since 1945. Some great beasts, having wandered in, can still be found here decades later, well beyond reach of the forces of evolution. Secluded behind the high, impassable peaks of prosopography, military history and, above all, *Quellenforschung*, Alexander historians do what Alexander historians have done for more than a hundred years: try to discover the facts about Alexander the Great between his accession to the throne of Macedon in October 336 and his death in Babylon on the evening of 10 June 323 BC; what really happened on the expedition, what really happened during the three big battles against the Persians, what really happened during the march into India and back again, what happened to Alexander, what happened at Court.[2]

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[1] Beard (2011) 36.

[2] Davidson (2001) 7.

The review appeared less than two months after the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, an event that triggered the invasions by Western forces of Afghanistan and Iraq, two countries whose territories were once part of Alexander's empire. More recently the 'Arab Spring' has brought violent political upheaval to Libya, Egypt and Syria, all also lands with which Alexander had involvement. Obviously it would be wrong to suggest any direct link between Alexander's campaigns and the recent history of the region where they took place, but one might expect the history of the last 13 years to have left its mark on the scholarship of an earlier period of conflict usually characterized as between 'West' and 'East'. However, as we will see, this has not generally been the case, and the situation observed by Davidson, and ten years later by Beard, has hardly changed, at least as far as the study of the period from 336 to *ca*. 281 is concerned. Some recent publications do allow us to put this state of affairs into a rather longer perspective than has been possible hitherto, and there are some outlying areas of 'Alexanderland' where other forces have been at work. One aim of this survey will be to explore the representation (or lack of it) of the 'East' in the modern historiography of Alexander, but there are other issues that will emerge.

Recent published work on Alexander is dominated by two formats: there are short, usually single-authored, volumes which aim to give an overview of Alexander's career[3] and there are edited volumes that are generated by regular conferences. There have been one or two conferences a year on Alexander and related topics for much of the last decade, and further volumes from conferences past are on their way, as are further conferences.[4] These volumes and conferences tend to involve many of the same scholars, addressing many of the same themes. Their remit is usually not restricted only to the reign of Alexander, venturing back at least as far as his father Philip, and on to the decades after his death, although Alexander remains the fixed centre around whom all else moves. The most recent edited volume to appear, Victor Alonso and Edward Anson's *After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochi (323-281 BC)*, takes as its theme the period of a little more than a generation after Alexander's death, when conflict between his successors was spread across all the territories he had claimed. Of its 18 chapters (excluding the introduction) only three deal directly with Mesopotamian and Iranian matters – and that is a higher proportion than in previous edited volumes. Marek Olbrycht has a chapter on 'Iranians in the Diadochi period',[5] which draws as far as possible on the evidence of archaeology to contextualize the events described by Diodorus and information from Strabo, and acknowledges the problems of our source material: 'The history of the Iranian lands in Western and Central Asia should not be looked at merely through the lens of Greek- or Macedonian-oriented sources'.[6] The other article that deals explicitly with Iranians is Sabine Müller's study of the wives of Ptolemy, Seleucus and Lysimachus.[7] The focus here however is on their position within their husbands' courts, and apart from some comments about the background of Seleucus wife Apama, the discussion is based essentially on Greek evidence – literary and epigraphic. Of course historians are constrained by lack of evidence, and this is directly addressed in the opening chapter by Tom Boiy, writing on 'The Diadochi history in cuneiform documentation'.[8] Here we are dealing with Mesopotamia, rather than Iran, and the pickings are particularly meagre for the years after Alexander's death – there are fragments of Babylonian chronicles and astronomical diaries, and some other documents less directly related to historical events. Boiy does draw attention to the 'most informative' of the chronicles, the Chron-

[3] These are too numerous to list. It is admittedly a very tempting format: see Bowden 2014.

[4] So far, for example, Bosworth and Baynham (2000) (the subject of Davidson's review); Heckel and Tritle (2003); (2009); Heckel et al. (2007); Howe and Reames (2008); Wheatley and Hannah (2009); Carney and Ogden (2010). The same period has also seen a number of collections whose origins are not in conferences, but rather in the ever-growing Companion industry: Roisman (2003); Roisman and Worthington (2010); Lane Fox (2011).

[5] Alonso Troncoso and Anson (2013) 159–82.

[6] Alonso Troncoso and Anson (2013) 178.

[7] Alonso Troncoso and Anson (2013) 199–214.

[8] Alonso Troncoso and Anson (2013) 7–16.

icle of the Diadochi, which is easily accessible in a preliminary online edition of all the Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic period.[9] It is striking then that Franca Landucci Gattinoni's chapter in the same volume, 'Seleucus vs. Antigonus: a study on the sources', makes no mention of the Babylonian material at all, and turns out to be an exercise in traditional *Quellenforschung* seeking Diodorus' source for his Book 19.90–92.[10] The rest of the volume is, like Landucci Gattinoni's chapter, mainly concerned with issues in Greek historiography or conclusions about military history that can be drawn from the Greek accounts. That is not to deny the interest of some chapters – but there is little here that could not have been written several decades ago.

Edward Anson, who co-edited this collection, is also the author of a recent Alexander monograph (*Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues*), although, as its subtitle reveals, he has not written a straightforward biography. Instead we have a series of chapters dealing with specific problems – the kind of chapter that might fit well into an edited volume. Although one of the issues discussed is the extent of eastern influence on the Macedonian court and court protocol,[11] the book makes no mention at any point of any non-Greek or Latin texts. Its concerns too are essentially Macedonian: there is a 22-page discussion of the constitutional position of the Macedonian king and eight pages on the assassination of Philip II.[12] Anson's Alexander, almost all of whose reign was spent east of the Hellespont, is a Macedonian in foreign lands, and understanding those foreign lands is unimportant when compared to understanding Alexander: 'Part of understanding Alexander's success in conquering such a vast empire is to realize that Alexander's ultimate goal was personal glory; all else was secondary'.[13]

Emphasis on Alexander's character is a common theme in short books on Alexander, and Thomas Martin and Christopher Blackwell's contribution (*Alexander the Great: The Story of an Ancient Life*) to the genre is no exception. Such books need a unique selling point (USP), and this one's is its claim to be based on 'the ancient sources', but this refers not so much to those sources available to us, as to those that Alexander himself read: above all Homer and Euripides,[14] but also Aesop, the epic cycle, Herodotus, Hesiod and Xenophon. If we understand what he read, we can make sense of what he did.[15] Given that the surviving narratives of Alexander's career are products of the Roman Empire, an interpretation of his actions through the work of writers writing only shortly before his lifetime has an apparent logic. But it remains a rather partial approach, and in any case it is not clear whether the USP is more than a marketing claim. All biographies of Alexander tend to tell more or less the same story, because they are based on the same four or five Roman-period narratives: Diodorus, Quintus Curtius, Plutarch and Arrian, supplemented by Justin and a few brief references elsewhere. There are a few episodes where the modern writer is required to choose between alternative stories, but otherwise what distinguishes one short book on Alexander from another is the overall assessment of the man: good (as here), bad[16] or ambiguous.[17]

We now have the opportunity to compare the depiction of Alexander in recent books with that of a significant scholar of an earlier generation who never published a book on the subject. The series of university lectures that Gaetano de Sanctis gave in the last years of his life has been published verbatim for the first time. De Sanctis was born in 1870 and was elected to the chair of ancient history at the University of Rome in 1929. He was forced to resign two years later after refusing to swear allegiance to fascism and was excluded from Italian academic life until the liber-

[9] Alonso Troncoso and Anson (2013) 8, 15 n.2 citing Finkel and van der Spek (2006).

[10] Alonso Troncoso and Anson (2013) 30–42.

[11] Anson (2013) 51–62.

[12] Anson (2013) 21–42, 74–81.

[13] Anson (2013) 121. This is a more romanticized version of George Grote's negative assessment: 'The acquisition of universal dominion—conceived not metaphorically, but literally, and conceived with greater facility in consequence of the imperfect geographical knowledge of the time—was the master-passion of his soul' (Grote (1856) 352).

[14] Martin and Blackwell (2012) xi.

[15] There is however little really new here; for a similar approach in a similar-sized book, see Thomas (2006).

[16] For example, Grainger (2009).

[17] For example, Rogers (2004).

ation of Rome in 1944, when he was restored to the chair. There can be little doubt that these experiences had an effect on his reading of ancient Greek history. The choice of subject each year was the professor's own, and in 1947–1948 he chose to lecture on 'The Empire of Alexander', which he treated thematically, prefacing his discussion with lectures on Greeks and Barbarians in the fifth and fourth centuries, and concluding with analyses of the ancient evidence, including an optimistic assessment of the authenticity of Alexander's royal diaries, which are contrasted with the essentially 'Oriental' character of the account of Alexander's empire to be found at the start of the First Book of Maccabees.[18] His interpretation of Alexander's claims to divinity is one of the points where recent events might be seen to have had an impact on his thought. De Sanctis rejected what was then the dominant view, that Alexander was following Greek precedents (Lysander in Samos, Agesilaus in Thasos), in favour of the theory that ruler-cult was an eastern practice, adopted by Alexander as he sought to establish himself as a 'national divinity'.[19] This is ruler-cult as a prototype for fascist cult of the leader, and de Sanctis appears keen to deny that it could ever have taken root in Greece, the land of liberty. In 1949–1950, when he was 79 years old, he took the subject 'Philip and Alexander: from Macedonian kingdom to universal monarchy', which he presented as a narrative running from the rise of Philip II to Alexander's victory at Gaugamela (the destruction of Persepolis is briefly mentioned). This is a story with three protagonists: the Macedonians, represented in particular by Alexander, the Persian Empire and the Greek cities, above all Athens. The fate of Greek freedom is the underlying theme of the narrative, and for de Sanctis this was a matter of universal significance, as the democratic Athens of the fifth century was crucial for the development of civilization.[20] What justified Alexander's military campaign was the way it brought this Athenian culture to the barbarian East. De Sanctis saw the conflict between east and west as a constant, and had no doubt about the superiority of the rational, freedom-loving West over the tyrannous and barbarous East. It is striking how this is expressed in his introduction to the theme of his lectures: for this opponent of fascism in the 1930s it was the Soviet Union that represented the new oriental barbarism of 1949.[21] Alexander himself does not come out of the story well. De Sanctis' decision to take the story down only to 331 BC was very deliberate. This was the moment at which the last oriental empire fell (the Parthians and Sassanians do not seem to loom large in this picture); but in the same year, with the death of Agis III outside Megalopolis, the last flames of Greek independence were also extinguished. But all was not quite lost: 'the inferior oriental civilization collapsed irretrievably beneath the blows of the Macedonians; the freedom of the Greeks was to rise again, and it was the Greeks themselves who determined whether they kept faith, that is to say, truly realized that by overcoming the self-interest of individuals, cities and classes, they would secure the future of their nation.'[22]

To read Alexander's campaigns in the light of contemporary politics was not, of course, a new idea. George Grote, writing in the middle of the 19th century, held similar views to de Sanctis about both the importance of democratic Athens and the malign influence of Alexander on Greece,[23] and he was reacting in turn to the historiography sympathetic to Alexander that was dominant in the last quarter of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th, when the American War of Independence and the French Revolution brought into question the role of monarchy. It would be reasonable to suggest that writers in this period were carrying on the practice of their Roman predecessors: Curtius' depiction of the trial of Amyntas looks very like the kind of treason trial under Tiberius depicted by Tacitus, to give one example,[24] and contemporary concerns influenced the way even the earliest historians of Alexander, writing in Alexandria in the decades after his death, depicted some of Alexander's exploits, as Tim Howe argues in his chapter on 'The

[18] De Sanctis at al. (2010) 64–68.
[19] De Sanctis et al. (2010) 36–44.
[20] De Sanctis et al. (2011) 14.
[21] De Sanctis et al. (2011) 13.
[22] De Sanctis et al. (2011) 291.
[23] See n.13 above.
[24] Curt. 7.1.10–2.10; Tac. *Ann.* 6.8; *cf.* Baynham (1998) 34.

Diadochoi, invented tradition, and Alexander's expedition to Siwah' in *After Alexander*.[25] It is however the modern tradition that runs from Grote and Johann Gustav Droysen through historians like de Sanctis and W.W. Tarn to more recent times that we can now understand more fully, thanks to a work which explores the intellectual background to that tradition.

It is usual to associate the beginning of serious scholarly study of Alexander the Great with the work of Droysen, whose *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen* was published in 1833, when he was only 25, followed by the two volumes of his *Geschichte des Hellenismus* in 1836 and 1843: the three volumes were republished in a second edition in 1877–1878. In the words of Ernst Badian, 'As we all know, J.G. Droysen, early in the 19th century, marked an epoch in Alexander studies, not only by first applying proper critical method in the use of the sources to fashion a narrative, but by his general interpretation'.[26] This view is perhaps now in need of revision. In Pierre Briant's massive and brilliant study of Alexander in the Enlightenment (*Alexandre des lumières: Fragments d'histoire européenne*), Droysen enters the story only on page 478, and has, one might say, missed the party. Briant locates the birth of serious study of Alexander in his '(très) long dix-huitième siècle', hesitating whether to mark the beginning with Pierre Bayle's *Alexandre de Macédoine* of 1697 or Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Histoire du commerce et de la navigation des Anciens*, published in 1716 but completed in 1667, or Samuel Clarke's 67-page *The Life and Death of Alexander the Great, The First Founder of the Grecian Empire*, which was paired with a life of Charlemagne and published in 1665, and which Briant identifies as the first book (or pamphlet) devoted to Alexander, or even with a group of studies on the Alexander historians that appeared in 1645–1646.[27] As an end-point Briant takes a cluster of events.[28] The campaigns of Napoleon, not least in Egypt, had a profound effect on how many Europeans saw the world. Egyptian artefacts made their way back to France and Britain, including a sarcophagus claimed to be from the original tomb of Alexander, which is now in the Sir John Soane Museum in London. At the same time the presence of French forces in the Near East was seen to pose a potential threat to British interests in India, and the fact that Alexander had moved rapidly from Egypt across Mesopotamia and Persia made the danger all the more real. The Greek War of Independence, which started in 1821 and concluded with the establishment of an independent Greek state by the London Protocol of 3 February 1830, was presented very much as a contest between European civilization and Asian barbarism, and, Briant argues, thus provided plenty of opportunity for comparison with the campaigns of Alexander.[29] The following year, 1831, saw the discovery, on 24 October, of one of the most spectacular artefacts related to Alexander – the 'Alexander Mosaic' in the House of the Faun in Pompeii; it also saw the deaths of two of the most important German Enlightenment scholars, both of whom contributed to the debate about Alexander – Barthold Niebuhr (2 January) and G.W.F. Hegel (14 November). So, by the end of 1831, two years before Droysen's work was published, Alexander had already been firmly established as an important figure in European history.

The Alexander of the Enlightenment was in the main the creation of *philosophes* from France, England, Scotland and Germany, with some contributions from Dutch philologists and later from Greek writers: he does not seem to have been a subject of interest to Spanish or Portuguese writers, nor to Italians. Briant appears to have read everything these savants wrote, listed in 43 pages of 'sources primaires'. This is very much a book about books, and this list of sources includes not only the original publication details of the works, but also the details of translations and revised editions. Briant is concerned to keep in mind the question of how perceptions of Alexander spread: the first of the book's 20 illustrations shows the frontispiece of Huet's *Histoire du commerce* along with those of its translations into Spanish, English, Italian, German and Dutch.

[25] Alonso Troncoso and Anson (2013) 57–70.

[26] Badian (1976) 280; *cf.* more recently Stoneman (2004) 7–9; Worthington (2004) 327.

[27] Briant (2012) 26–27.

[28] Briant (2012) 28–30.

[29] On European attitudes to the creation of a Greek state, see most recently Beaton (2013) especially 272.

The discussion is divided into four thematic sections, and the work of his subjects is considered from different angles each time: first the critical re-evaluation of the ancient sources, where the starring role belongs to Baron de Sainte-Croix, whose *Critical Enquiry into the Life of Alexander the Great by the Ancient Historians* (to give the English title of 1793) was first published in 1775, but drew on the work of earlier generations of scholars stretching back more than a century. This is followed by consideration of Alexander himself, transformed from hero to philosopher king: here Montesquieu played an important role, but so too did the Scottish historian John Gillies. The third part, 'Empires', which places interest in Alexander in the context of European overseas expansion, discusses amongst other things 'British travellers and spies in the footsteps of Alexander', that is, the work of the players of 'the Great Game' in Afghanistan and India. It is in this part of the book that German scholars of the period 1790–1830 come into view, albeit briefly.[30] In Germany there was interest in the same aspects of Alexander's career as inspired French and British scholars, although, without an overseas empire of their own, German scholars could look at Alexander's achievements more dispassionately. The most widely-circulated German book to deal with the implications of Alexander's conquests appears to have been A.H.L. Heeren's *Historical Researches into the Politics, Intercourse and Trade of the Principal Nations of Antiquity*, published in German in 1793–1796, in French in 1800 and in English in 1833. In it he suggests that it was Alexander's attempt to unify the peoples of his empire through intermarriage, education and trade that was his greatest legacy, and one which subsequent conquerors also appreciated – a view which was to be taken up by Droysen, but was perhaps less appealing to those then actually controlling imperial possessions outside Europe.

In the final section of the book, 'The sense of history', Briant relates the study of Alexander to broader contemporary concerns, and in the last chapter, 'Alexander, Europe and the unchanging Orient', he considers how the Achaemenid Empire was understood in the Enlightenment.[31] Throughout the period almost the whole territory of Alexander's empire was under Ottoman control. By the end of the 18th century, the weakness of the Ottoman Empire was an increasing theme in European writing, not least for Greeks campaigning for the liberation of their homeland: Briant draws particular attention to the works of Adamantios Korais and Rigas Velestinlis. Although sites like Persepolis were increasingly known to European travellers, Persian royal inscriptions remained undeciphered until the 1830s, and, in the absence of information from the Persians themselves, there was a tendency to interpret the culture and actions of the Achaemenid kings in the light of what was believed about their Ottoman successors. It was easy to compare the situation of the sultans of the late 18th century, feeble heirs to earlier conquerors, with that of Darius III. Briant gives the example of G.B. de Mably's description of the contemporary Ottoman court in his *Public Law of Europe* of 1748, which he compares with the same author's description of the Achaemenid court in his *Observations on the Greeks* of the following year.[32] The equation of Ottomans and Achaemenids had a long history: after the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, as part of their celebrations, the victorious Venetians had staged a performance of Aeschylus' *Persae* on Zakynthos.[33] And since the Ottomans were consistently portrayed as the enemy – particularly as the cause of Greek independence was taken up in western Europe in the late 18th century – it would always be the case that even those who, like Korais (foreshadowing de Sanctis), considered Alexander and the Macedonians to have been the first to enslave Greece, saw the empire of Darius as ripe for conquest, and deserving of destruction. Even when the decipherment of cuneiform allowed the texts of Persian royal inscriptions to be read, the complete absence of texts from the second half of the fourth century, and the grandiloquent tone of those of Darius and Xerxes, could have done little to change this perception.

[30] Briant (2012) 454–81.
[31] Briant (2012) 513–56.
[32] Briant (2012) 535.
[33] Briant (2012) 514.

What is surprising is that nearly two centuries after the end of Briant's period, perceptions remain so little changed. If anything, the events of 9/11 and its aftermath have encouraged more readings of the history of encounters between Greece and Persia, in particular the 'Persian Wars' of the early fifth century, in terms of an eternal conflict of 'West vs East'.[34] Alexander and Darius III have not been deployed in this exercise to the extent that, for example, Leonidas and Xerxes have,[35] but this may in part be because Alexander has been caught up in a separate quarrel, over Greek rather than 'western' identity. As Briant shows, the Greek nationalist writers of the late 18th century were keen to recruit Alexander to the cause of Greek independence,[36] and it is from this period that the ancient Macedonians emerge as a significant component of an imagined ancient Greek nation. When the issue of the recognition of the (Former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia as an independent state emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Alexander the Great had therefore already been a significant figure in Greek national identity for 200 years.[37] The impact of the 'Macedonian question' on scholarship is visible in the recent publication of two Companions to ancient Macedon(ia): one has a chapter by Loring Danforth on 'Ancient Macedonia, Alexander the Great and the star or sun of Vergina: national symbols and the conflict between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia', while the other contains contributions from Greek archaeologists currently excavating Macedonian sites.[38] Neither volume has a great deal to say about Macedonia's contact with the East, although Marek Olbrycht offers a chapter in the former on 'Macedonia and Persia' in a section on 'Neighbours'.[39] In the other volume, the only scholar to discuss contact between Macedonia and Persia is Olga Palagia, who suggests that 'wall paintings and furniture … combined with the contents' of the Macedonian royal tombs at Vergina 'recall the contents of the tomb of Cyrus'.[40] Palagia argues that knowledge of the tomb and its contents must have been brought back to Macedonia by Alexander's veterans, and hence that tomb II must postdate Alexander's campaigns and therefore cannot be the tomb of Philip II. The volume starts with Robin Lane Fox's argument that tomb II was indeed that of Philip II,[41] which raises an interesting possibility. If Palagia is right to see a connection between the artwork at Vergina and Persian originals, and if, on the other hand, Lane Fox is right in identifying tomb II as Philip's, and predating Alexander's campaign, then one might be observing more interaction between Philip's Macedonia and the Achaemenid Empire than either scholar would be happy to accept.[42] There is a danger that the concern to establish the Hellenic credentials of the Macedonian court of Philip and Alexander will discourage exploration of any Asian influence on it.

In a section entitled 'D'Alexandre au Christ', in the penultimate chapter of his book, Briant briefly discusses the use of Alexander in the 'providential history' written in the period of the Enlightenment, that is the work of those writers who saw the campaigns of Alexander as part of

[34] As argued by McCaskie (2012) especially 168–69.

[35] As is clear from a comparison of recent scholarly discussions of the reception of the two conflicts, unless this reflects the different attitudes of the editors. The issue of East vs West is essentially invisible in an edited volume on Oliver Stone's *Alexander* (Cartledge and Greenland (2010)), while it is a consistent theme in one on the Persian Wars based on a conference of 2003 (Bridges et al. (2007) see especially 9–10).

[36] Briant (2012) 522–28.

[37] This point is not mentioned in Loring Danforth's discussion of what might be called the 'Macedonian question' in Roisman and Worthington (2010) 572–99, especially 583; on the other hand, the claim that Alexander had been recognized as a 'Greek conqueror' for 2,000 years, made by Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis in a speech cited by Danforth, is equally problematic.

[38] Roisman and Worthington (2010); Lane Fox (2011). For a brief summary of the background, see Romm (2013).

[39] Roisman and Worthington (2010) 342–68. There is some discussion of later Persian views of Macedonian history in Sulochana Asirvatham's chapter on 'Perspectives on the Macedonians from Greece, Rome and beyond' (99–124) and inevitably some discussion in the chapter on Alexander himself by I. Worthington and D. Gilley (186–207).

[40] Lane Fox (2011) 480.

[41] Lane Fox (2011) 1–34, Palagia's views about the paintings are discussed at 9–18.

[42] This has been argued before, most recently by Spawforth (2007) 92.

God's larger plan for the world.[43] This was a theme particularly stressed by Charles Rollin in his *Ancient History* of 1730–1738: the spread of the Greek language, and Greek philosophical ideas, that resulted from the actions of Alexander and his successors were a necessary preparation for the arrival and spread of the Christian gospel. Briant quotes Rollin as saying:

> It has been also remarked, that the design of God in extending the Grecian conquests through those very nations that were to be converted by the gospel, was, that the philosophy of the Greeks should be equally diffusive; in order to prepare the minds of those barbarous people. ... Christianity derived advantages from all these preparations, and has gathered in all the fruit of those seeds which Providence scattered on the minds of men at such a remote distance, and which the grace of Jesus Christ caused to spring forth, at the period pre-ordained from all eternity by the divine decrees.[44]

This is a reading of the historical role of Alexander that has a surprising longevity, however secularized. So we may read from 2004:

> What became by conquest the eastern half of the mighty Roman Empire was, essentially, the Hellenized Middle East created in the wake of Alexander's conquests. Within the bounds of that eastern Roman Empire Christianity rose and was disseminated. Yet, from being an oriental religion by its origin, Christianity in some of its most politically potent forms became a Western one, indeed a pillar of Western civilization.[45]

This is not providential history as such, but it is a sign that even in post-Enlightenment times, the subject of Alexander and Christianity retains interest. So too do attempts to relate Alexander more directly to Jesus, although recent attempts have not convinced.[46] Now another slim volume on the subject has been produced by Gianfranco Stroppini De Focara, a poet and scholar on Virgil, who is also an admirer of the extremely conservative French Catholic priest Guillaume de Tanoüarn. We are offered Alexander as a traveller on an initiatory journey, inspired by Aristotle to create an empire of *philia* that will precede Jesus' religion of love. For all Rollin's limitations, at least his version of *histoire providentielle* was grounded in history.

One of the principal effects of Enlightment scholarship on the representation of Alexander the Great was to raise the status of the Alexander historians (Diodorus, Curtius, Plutarch, Arrian and Justin) and consequently to marginalize the tradition that was the source for most of what was known about Alexander in the previous 1,500 years, the *Alexander Romance.* The *Romance* is generally ignored by those writing biographies or histories of Alexander, except when it is cited in support of a claim for which no evidence can be found in the Alexander historians.[47] The one notable recent exception is Alexander Demandt's *Alexander der Grosse: Leben und Legende*,[48] but this is in many ways more a work of compilation than of historical analysis, presenting very comprehensively the information from almost every available source (including Babylonian astronomical diaries and Egyptian reliefs) without choosing between competing accounts. Current scholarship on the *Alexander Romance*, characterized by interdisciplinary approaches and an ever-widening range of texts, could scarcely be more different from recent work on the 'historical' Alexander.[49]

[43] Briant (2012) 503–05.

[44] Original French in Briant (2012) 504; translation from the English edition of Rollin's *Ancient History* (London 1738).

[45] Cartledge (2004) 241: he goes on 'It is an image (possibly a mirage) of that Christian civilization, fatally coupled with the certainly distorted counter-image of Islam as an oriental 'Other', that has led directly to numerous conflicts between East and West – most recently, the so-called Iraq War of 2003'.

[46] For example, Amitay (2010).

[47] For example, only the *Romance* (1.34.2) explicitly states that Alexander was crowned Pharaoh in Egypt: Anson (2013) 156.

[48] Demandt (2009).

[49] Zuwiyya (2011) offers an overview of current knowledge. The Fondazione Lorenzo Valla's series of Greek and Roman writers published by Mondadori includes in its set of works on Alexander a three-volume edition of the text of the Greek *Alexander Romance* with

The Alexander Romance *in Persia and the East* displays the range of work being carried out on part of the *Romance* tradition. The eastern material has been less studied than the western, not least because of the range of languages it comes in, and this makes the volume particularly useful. Like *After Alexander*, this collection emerged from a conference (in Exeter in July 2010), and two scholars have contributed to both volumes, while several others have contributed to earlier Alexander volumes.[50] But the similarities between the two volumes are outweighed by the differences, not least the presence of a large number of full-colour illustrations here. The chronological range of the material considered is very wide, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, in Graham Anderson's study of story-patterns,[51] to Briant's 'British travellers and spies', who are the subject of Warwick Ball's chapter on myth and politics on the Northwest Frontier,[52] while the 'East' of the title stretches from Byzantium (in Corinne Jouanno's discussion of two late Byzantine versions of the *Romance*)[53] to China (in Yuriko Yamanaka's exploration of Chinese geographies and encyclopaedias).[54] Several of the contributions are mainly concerned with presenting new material and raising questions about its roots, such as the medieval Turkish Alexander stories from manuscripts in St Petersburg and Ankara discussed by Hendrik Boeschoten, which are full of strange buildings and mechanical objects,[55] or the eighth-century Arabic *Qiṣṣa al-Iskandar* introduced by David Zuwiyya.[56] These texts vary enormously in form and in intellectual 'status': the *Romance* provides the basis for the account of Alexander in Ferdowsi's Persian epic, the *Shahnameh*, discussed in the chapters by Haila Manteghi, Mario Casari, Sabine Müller and Firuza Melville;[57] it also provided material for Coptic school exercises, as discussed by Leslie MacCoull.[58] It might indeed have been valuable for more of the chapters to discuss the cultural context of their texts – where of course that could be established. Both the range of forms and the uncertainty about the histories of these texts make generalizing theoretical approaches less helpful than they might otherwise be, although David Selden, in the longest chapter of the book, offers an attractive suggestion of treating the *Romance* as a large-scale 'text network [which] united readers across Eurasia, without homogenizing them, in a utopian vision of the world'.[59]

In the context of this review it is important to ask to what extent discussion of the *Alexander Romance* can contribute anything to the study of the 'historical Alexander'. The earliest text of the Greek *Alexander Romance* is dated to the third century AD, which is later than any of the surviving 'historical' texts, except, perhaps, Justin. However, it is accepted that the *Romance* has its origins in Egypt in the third century BC, that is, roughly contemporary with the narratives written by the men who accompanied Alexander. The Hellenistic and Roman moralists who used Alexander's life as a source for *exempla* will not necessarily have distinguished between 'historical' and 'romantic' stories to make their points, and when Arrian chose to include episodes that struck him as 'worth telling and not entirely unbelievable' (ἀξιαφήγητά τε ... καὶ οὐ πάντῃ ἄπιστα), he was not necessarily referring to stories from 'historical' narratives.[60] In his own essay in *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*, on 'Persian aspects of the Romance tradition',[61] Richard Stoneman puts the Romance tradition into a Persian context that includes Achaemenid

Italian translation and commentary by Richard Stoneman, of which the first two volumes are so far available (Stoneman and Gargiulo (2007–2012)) as well as a selection of texts entitled *Alexander in the Western Middle Ages* (Boitani et al. (1997)) and a promised companion, *The Eastern Alexander*.

[50] Sabine Müller and Daniel Ogden appear in both; Sulochana Asirvatham, Olga Palagia and Richard Stoneman have chapters in one or more of the volumes listed in n.4 above.

[51] Stoneman et al. (2012) 81–102.

[52] Stoneman et al. (2012) 127–58.

[53] Stoneman et al. (2012) 105–15.

[54] Stoneman et al. (2012) 263–74.

[55] Stoneman et al. (2012) 117–26.

[56] Stoneman et al. (2012) 205–18.

[57] Stoneman et al. (2012) 161–74, 175–203, 295–309, 405–09.

[58] Stoneman et al. (2012) 255–61.

[59] Stoneman et al. (2012) 19–59, quotation at 49.

[60] Ar. *Anab.* proem 3; see Bowden (2013) 62–66.

[61] Stoneman et al. (2012) 3–18.

story-telling from before Alexander's time, elements of which can be traced in the fragments of Xanthus of Lydia, Ctesias and Xenophon amongst others, as well as Parthian and Sassanian stories, and the *Darab-nameh* of the 11th or 12th century. There is a great deal of interplay between Greek and Persian material in all of this, with 'influence' working in more than one direction, as recent work on the Greek novel has also indicated.[62] Stoneman suggests that Alexander's campaign marked the point at which the flow of story-patterns from Persia to Greece was reversed, with stories about Alexander feeding into a rich story-telling tradition that preserved some 'genuine historical titbits' into the Parthian period and beyond.[63] The implications of this for our understanding of the 'historical' Alexander are important. Chares of Mitylene, one of the 'lost historians' of Alexander and his court usher (εἰσαγγελεύς), was working in an environment that was arguably more Achaemenid than Macedonian. It is not unreasonable to suggest that his stories, reported by Plutarch and Athenaeus amongst others, reflect in part at least a Persian perception of Alexander – just as Ctesias is likely to reflect an insider's understanding of the Achaemenid court of an earlier period.[64] Elements of the descriptions of Alexander's military actions resemble those of earlier kings: a repeated motif, which can be found in descriptions of Ashurnasirpal, Artaxerxes II and Alexander, sees the king taking the lead to cut the way through precipitous mountain terrain.[65] These examples suggest the possibility that the 'historical' traditions about Alexander preserved in Greek and Latin texts may well owe more to Achaemenid narratives (both official accounts and court stories) than has previously been acknowledged, and that they incorporate Persian perceptions of Alexander as well as Greek. How to identify such elements, and how to interpret them, remains a challenge.

What is the future for Alexander studies? In his article of 2001, Davidson suggests that 'love', by which he means in particular homoeroticism, is 'probably the most significant blindspot among the historians of Alexander'. In the Macedonian royal court, it was not only military matters and political rivalry that were significant:

> If Alexander historians want to understand him better, they will have to shake off their prejudices about what qualifies as a fact, which sources are serious, and when events are meaningful. They should be paying more attention, if not to what Alexander had for breakfast, then at least to whom he had it with.[66]

Beard was not entirely convinced by this, preferring an alternative four-letter word, 'Rome': 'I suspect that the change Davidson wanted in "Alexanderland" will come only when we are prepared to realize that it is as much a Roman country as a Greek one'.[67] These criticisms are well made, but both scholars maintain a distinctly western perspective. I would suggest that change will only come to Alexanderland if it is opened up on all sides, west and east, and north and south,[68] so that theoretical approaches and forms of evidence hitherto underused in the work of scholars of Alexander the Great can be fully exploited. But this would also require that scholars act on the widely shared understanding that the surviving narrative sources are not reliable enough to use as the basis of any sort of biography. As Anson says, citing an earlier scholar, 'any attempt to discover the "real" Alexander may ultimately be impossible',[69] and this has implications for

[62] Davis (2002); Whitmarsh (2008) 9–13.

[63] Stoneman et al. (2012) 16–17.

[64] Stronk (2010) 15–30.

[65] Ashurnasirpal: *RIMA* (= Grayson (1987–1991)) 2, A.0.101.1; Artaxerxes: Plut. *Artox.* 24.9–11; Alexander: Arr. *Anab.* 3.17.2–5, Curt. 5.3.8–9. *Cf.* Kuhrt (2007) 544–47.

[66] Davidson (2001) 10.

[67] Beard (2011) 37.

[68] Postcolonialist approaches do not appear yet to have been brought to bear on the study of Alexander, although they have on the *Alexander Romance* (for example Akbari (2005)) and on Achaemenid Persia (for example Lincoln (2010)).

[69] Anson (2013) 3, citing Bosworth (1988) xi. For a contrary view, see Worthington (2004) 6: 'the bulk of my book is a factual, narrative account of Alexander's reign and his exploits, in which I have followed the accounts of ancient authors that today are accepted as generally reliable'.

what sort of works should be written about Alexander. Instead of accounts of the campaigns of Alexander, and interpretations of his motivation on the basis of analyses of his character (where we have no real means to advance on the judgements of Plutarch and Arrian), it would be better to locate Alexander within the broader social (including religious) and political structures of the Aegean and the Near East.[70]

It must however be recognized that traditional biographies of Alexander will carry on being written, and it would be wrong to lay the blame for this entirely on their authors. A survey of the prefaces to books about Alexander is revealing. Anson asks: 'Why another book on Alexander? It's a good question with, perhaps, not an adequate answer. I could blame Michael Greenwood of Bloomsbury Academic for asking me to write one, but I guess that would be disingenuous'.[71] Carol Thomas notes that a publisher asked her 'might I think of an interesting new approach for a biography of Alexander for the Blackwell biography series?'.[72] Ian Worthington says 'I have many people to thank. First, Heather McCallum at Pearson, who invited me to write this book. I have been working on Alexander and on fourth-century Greek history for many years, but I never thought of writing a biography of Alexander until she asked me'.[73] Publishers recognize that there is a market for the familiar, as long as it can be presented simultaneously as new and distinctive, a situation familiar to Arrian.[74] But if Alexander books must be written, is it possible to write them without presenting the story of Alexander as one of a westerner who went to war against the East? This is a challenge as much to the imagination of scholars as to their understanding.

In 1997 the BBC broadcast Michael Wood's series, *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*, in which Wood travelled over the territories conquered by Alexander, encountering a street performance of episodes from the *Shahnameh* in Isfahan (although he notes that Iskander is not now a popular subject for performance, Sorabh and Rustam being preferred) and being told of 'Alexander the Accursed' by Zoroastrians and that Alexander appears in the Koran as Dhul Qarnain, the Two Horned one.[75] Even then, war between Britain and America and Iraq was a determining factor on the broadcast, and Wood observed the battlefield of Gaugamela from an AWACS aircraft that was part of Operation Provide Comfort, defending Iraqi Kurds from Saddam Hussein. Nonetheless the shots of Wood, with the Loeb text of Arrian in his hand, talking to Iranians and Pakistanis about Alexander, however much they were staged, offer an image of where Alexander scholarship might have headed over the last 17 years. It is not only world events that have prevented that.

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[70] *Cf.*, for example, Briant and Joannès (2006). Briant's own short book on Alexander is not a straightforward narrative and does give due attention to eastern evidence, but its focus remains more on the issues that are the focus of traditional Alexander historiography, reflecting the fact that the first French edition dates back to 1974: Briant (2010).

[71] Anson (2013) vi.

[72] Thomas (2006) ix.

[73] Worthington (2004) xiv.

[74] Arr. *Anab.* proem 3: 'If anyone is surprised that I have written on this subject even though so many historians before me have already done so, I would ask them to look at all the other books first and then read mine'. This is quoted, self-deprecatingly perhaps, at the start of the author's note in Freeman (2011) xxi.

[75] The series led to a book: Wood (1997).

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