

Framing the Debate

By K.R. Moore

“Treason doth never prosper: what’s the reason?
Why, if it prosper, none dare call it treason.”

— Sir John Harington
(4 August 1561 – 20 November 1612)¹

The *Latin Vulgate Bible*’s apocryphal first book of *Esdras* states that Cyrus the Great of Persia, a figure in whom the subject of this investigation would be keenly interested, was suitably impressed by Zorobabel’s argument, *Magna est veritas et pravalet* — “Great is the truth, and it prevails”, that he permitted the captive Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their destroyed Temple.² Still, it seems that even the truth, however great, cannot quite prevail over Alexander III of Macedon, the Great. His victorious record remains intact despite 2,300 plus years of near constant engagement on the battlefield of academia. Since we are concerned with his reception here, it is obligatory to concede that we may never know the “real” Alexander, if he may be said to exist at all. Much of that which we can hope to attain as the “truth” persists only amongst these receptions. Even so, I feel that I ought to also allow that the level of reasonably considered information obtainable from receptions, and especially from those closest to his own era, does offer us fleeting glimpses into his world and its major events. Those glimpses beckon scholarly champions, driving them into the affray, to both discover and to re-shape the life and times of Alexander. It is also clear that some receptions are so influenced by their own respective *Zeitgeist* and agendas that they border on solipsism; although this too affords volumes about our forebears and their eras. We like to think that contemporary scholarship is more objective. And rightly so. Yet, disputes still abound and are often particularly related to their analogues stemming both directly and by diverse routes from the time of the Macedonian Conqueror.

The contributions that follow this chapter will explore many such receptions of Alexander the Great. They have been chosen to reflect the range and scale of the impact that scarcely a third of a century of prodigiously historical activity inflicted on a world that would itself be significantly transformed and fashioned in consequence of those very events. They will likewise explore various ongoing historical debates about these topics. The aim of this chapter, as its title suggests, is to “frame the debate” around Alexander. Of course, that statement is misleading as there are and have been numerous debates about him and it would be impossible to treat them all in this or any volume. Indeed, the Great Library of Alexandria itself would just begin to contain them all. What I intend to do here is to look closely at three selected “episodes”, presented through our primary sources, and examine some of the major arguments and debates about them within subsequent historiographical traditions. Such contested points will be illuminated when considered in context and with regard to trends in scholarship; but they will also be seen to have taken on a kind of *Nachleben* of their own, metatextually interacting with one another, echoing and being distorted—and sometimes even clarified—through the actions of time and the whims of fortune. Although, I also feel compelled to add that, whatever this chapter’s (or indeed this book’s) claims to any objectivity or “truth” concerning Alexander the Great, it should be acknowledged that this is, after all, ultimately just another reception, at best a post-scripted footnote to an obscure passage buried deep within a grand narrative which is itself mostly lost, in no small part imagined and perpetually contested.

Framing the contentious debate(s) around Alexander, what he intended and what he signified, also requires choices to be made about which topics to examine and which to omit.

¹ *Epigrams*, Book IV, Epistle 5. Cp. “*Prosperum ac felix scelus/ Virtus vocatur*” (“Successful and fortunate crime/ is called virtue”), Seneca, *Hercules Furens*, II.250.

² I *Esdras* 4:41; between 538 and 520 B.C.

Thus yet another “Alexander” is here born to add to the growing legion that, if its inmates could somehow step beyond the written page and the minds that conceive them, would make up an army larger than that, reported in our sources, of Darius III, King of Kings, near Issus in November of 333 B.C. So, let us then receive this new Alexander, with fanfare appropriate to his station, taking up our own panoply of scholarly arms and banners. The episodes to be scrutinised in this chapter will be the assassination of Alexander’s father Philip II of Macedon in 336, followed by the infamous razing of Thebes by Alexander in 335 and, finally, the fate of his historian Callisthenes of Olynthus in 327. Understandably, if regrettably, it is from the more grisly incidents credited to Alexander that the most heated debates tend to arise and I ask the reader to pardon my dwelling upon such unpleasant things for they are highly revealing. This chapter could also quite readily consider many more examples were there sufficient space and time. Such would, however, require at least a book and will be omitted, if occasionally referenced. I am aware too that this is well-trodden, scholarly ground; yet, a reappraisal of such points is, I think, important, by way of illustration. Looming large in all of these incidents and their receptions is what I consider to be the overarching debate: whether Alexander the Great was in fact just a “Lucky Tyrant” or, in some sense, a beneficent “Civiliser”, the promoter of the “Unity of (Hu)Mankind”. Of course the truth, whatever that is, will always be more complex.

In the summer of 336 B.C., Philip II of Macedon was publicly assassinated during the wedding ceremony of his daughter Cleopatra to Alexander I, the Molossian client-king of Epirus, at the ancient Macedonian capital of Aegae, by Pausanias, son of Cerastus with a Celtic dagger. The latter was captain of Philip’s personal bodyguards and he clearly had some kind of grievance against his king. This pivotal event was arguably the first true test of Alexander’s premiership and one which he passed, being acclaimed king by the Macedonian people under arms. He dealt promptly with a number of rivals and then set out to govern his realm and expand it. A debate arose around Alexander’s potential culpability in the untimely demise of his father. And this first episode that I am considering deftly exhibits the sheer perplexity encountered when trying to pin down precisely what happened in any key event for which we have information relating to Alexander’s thirteen-year, epic reign.

Beginning with the ancient sources, Plutarch (*ca.* A.D. 46 –120), the Platonist priest of Apollo at Delphi, sometime magistrate of Chaeronea and popular biographer of famous Greeks and Romans, gives us only a passing explanation of this. He is likely drawing on Cleitarchus’ (mid to late 3rd century B.C.) now lost, but by all accounts exceedingly popular, *History of Alexander*, which was probably written between 310 and 301 in Alexandria, perhaps around the same time as Ptolemy was writing his own *History*. Cleitarchus, the son of an historian named Deinon, is chiefly associated with his home city of Alexandria and not thought to have gone on the Persian expedition.³ He probably accessed the overly flattering *History* of Callisthenes (*ca.* 360 – 328 B.C.) as a main source, along with tales gleaned from Macedonian soldiers living in Egypt at the time.⁴ Neither he nor Callisthenes were reported to have been present at the assassination of Philip; although, the latter may have been there, given his close association with the Macedonian court.

Plutarch relates the tale of Pausanias having been sexually outraged by Attalus, one of Philip’s leading generals, (or under his auspices) perhaps up to eight years prior to the assassination and, having had no redress from the king, was seething in his desire for vengeance.⁵ Diodorus gives a fuller account to which I shall shortly return. It is unclear why the assassin chose this moment, out of so many earlier opportunities, to exact his retribution. Persian gold, royal intrigues and the influence of the Athenian leader Demosthenes have all been advanced as

³ Heckel 2006, 86.

⁴ See Cartledge 2005, 243 ff.

⁵ Aristotle *Politics* 1311b.1-2, supports this account.

causal factors but never adequately demonstrated.⁶ Certainly Alexander proceeded from the official position that the Persians were involved. Diodorus states that Pausanias was urged on to his treason by a hitherto unknown sophist named Hermocrates.⁷ Plutarch adds, without giving his own opinion, that “it was Olympias who was chiefly blamed for the assassination, because she was believed to have encouraged the youth and incited him to revenge”.⁸ She undoubtedly had grievances of her own, having fallen from grace as “first” wife and Queen and having endured exile and estrangement.⁹ But does that make her guilty? A hint of culpability is also aimed at Alexander insofar as Plutarch indicates that Pausanias went to him with his complaints against Attalus possibly at the time of the affront whereupon Alexander, at the age of about twelve, is said to have referenced the topic of revenge-murder, quoting from Euripides’ *Medea* (289), “The bride, the groom and the bride-giver”. But these words, if true, are open to much interpretation. At any rate, if Alexander actually said them, it was years before the actual assassination when Philip’s future bride, Attalus’ niece, would have been about nine and presumably before the eventual wedding with Philip had even been arranged (337 or 338 B.C.),¹⁰ which makes it seem like this anecdote “may well have been invented after the fact” as a revisionist postscript by antagonistic sources.¹¹ That is, it would be unless Pausanias approached Alexander around the time of the wedding to Attalus’ niece, but this is never clarified and it seems odd, though not impossible, that he would wait so long to seek help from the prince.

Plutarch accessed both the Vulgate (mainly Cleitarchus the Alexandrian historian, Onisicritus the helmsman and sensationalist, Chares of Mytilene who was Alexander’s court-marshal, and sometimes Callisthenes, personal historian to the king) and the Official (mainly Pharaoh Ptolemy I Soter, Aristobolus the engineer, Nearchus the fleet admiral and, again, Callisthenes) traditions of Alexander scholarship but it seems clear that the most detailed account of the murder of Philip must come exclusively from the Vulgate sources and especially Cleitarchus. Arrian of Nicomedia (ca. A.D. 86/89 – after 146/160) only briefly mentions the death of the king in 336, and we can assume that Ptolemy, himself still in exile at the time over his involvement in the Pixodarus Affair, to be presently considered, either did not discuss it in his lost book, which was Arrian’s main source, or only did so, as with Arrian, in passing.¹² The claim of Olympias’ involvement probably originated, in the early historiography at least, with Cleitarchus.¹³ The 1st century B.C. historian Diodorus Siculus, another who draws on the Vulgate tradition and Cleitarchus in particular, gives a much more detailed account of Pausanias’ grievance against, and animosity for, Philip but notably does not lay any blame on Olympias or Alexander.¹⁴ Quintus Curtius Rufus (ca. A.D. 1st century), another Vulgate writer, is muted on this topic since it would have been covered in his missing books; although, one suspects that he might have repeated or expanded upon the anti-Alexandrian calumnies. The final ancient source to address this matter is Justin’s *Epitome of the Philippic History* of Pompeius Trogus. There is much debate about when Justin lived (probably A.D. 2nd century) but Trogus, a Romanised Gaul, was writing roughly at the same time as Diodorus and likewise following Cleitarchus and the Vulgate tradition.¹⁵ And Trogus (and/or Justin) too lays blame on Olympias, who he says even provided the getaway horses, obliquely blaming Alexander as well. Justin indicates that “it is also believed that he [Pausanias] was encouraged to it by Olympias...and that Alexander himself was

⁶ Heckel 2006, 110-111.

⁷ Diodorus Siculus *Library of World History*, XVI.9; this Hermocrates may have been the teacher of Callimachus the Alexandrian poet, for which see Funaioli, *Real-Encyclopädie*, VIII, 1920, col. 887 ff.

⁸ Plutarch *Alexander*, X.4.

⁹ See Tarn 1956, 3 ff.; and cp. Cartledge 2005, 61 ff.

¹⁰ Green 1992.

¹¹ Freeman 2011, 42.

¹² Arrian *Anabasis* I.1

¹³ Young 2014, 14-15.

¹⁴ Diodorus XVI.94.1-4.

¹⁵ Cartledge 2005 279.

not ignorant of the murder of his father.”¹⁶ It is difficult to say whether this further accusation originated from Cleitarchus, Trogus or Justin himself (or some hitherto unknown text). The fact that Diodorus omitted it may tell us more about his own inclinations, that he was more favourable to Alexander through admiration of him, much as with Plutarch, rather than revealing the source of this purported intelligence.¹⁷ He may have also made a critical choice based on his researches. Even if he was favourable to Alexander, the omission of the queen as a suspect is telling. It does seem clear that the allegations of Alexander and Olympias’ culpability derive almost exclusively from the Vulgate tradition rather than the Official, which is to be expected.¹⁸

Amongst the modern receptions the difference of opinion manifests along similar lines but with greater magnitude. A good place to begin is with Sir William Woodthorpe Tarn (26 February 1869 – 7 November 1957). Granted, one could look to George Grote (17 November 1794 – 18 June 1871) or a range of earlier sources that partake of the long tradition of Alexander scholarship; however, others in this volume will address these far better in their chapters and I shall not infringe too much on their bailiwicks. Tarn, along with his rival the Austrian-born Ernst Badian (8 August 1925 – 1 February 2011), effectively laid the groundwork for the modern debates and most scholars in the later 20th and early-21st centuries have followed on from these. In his tersely concise prose, Tarn writes:

Antipater’s attitude absolutely acquits Alexander of complicity. Olympias may have been privy to the plot; but the only evidence against her is Antipater’s subsequent enmity to her, for our tradition on the subject derives from Cassander’s propaganda later.¹⁹

I will address Cassander’s alleged influences in time. Tarn’s position is disputed by Badian who develops an elaborate conspiracy theory making Alexander, with the help of his mother, the originator of the regicide.²⁰ Paul Cartledge, almost half a century later would echo that view. He begins tentatively enough, exploring the possibility as a hypothetical exercise, but by his third reason in favour of Alexander’s complicity (having Pausanias killed rather than put on trial), Cartledge seems convinced. However, perhaps grudgingly, he comments that the case against him is “cumulatively impressive, but not proven beyond a shadow of reasonable doubt”; he nonetheless states that Alexander “benefitted the most” from Philip’s death.²¹

Even so, it is also easy enough to find reputable, modern scholars who argue that Alexander had relatively little to gain by Philip’s murder, that the king’s sudden demise could have potentially weakened his position and thrown open a power struggle that he was by no means guaranteed to win.²² Some even argue, based on Alexander’s piety as attested in a range of sources that parricide, with its associated *miasma*, would have been unthinkable to the highly religious prince.²³ This depends, of course, upon whether one believes him to have actually been religious or whether, more cynically, he used religion purely as a means to political power. Some combination of the two might be closer to the truth but there can be no doubt that the stain of parricide would have been damning.²⁴ It is also the case that Alexander’s relationship with his father had suffered at times. This was due in part to Philip’s marriage into Attalus’ family in 338 or early 337, as this general appears to have held Alexander in contempt. Attalus, in his cups after the wedding, reportedly “called upon the Macedonians to beseech the gods that from Philip

¹⁶ Justin *Epitome*, IX.7.1-2

¹⁷ Cartledge 2005, 256.

¹⁸ See Anson 2013, 74-77.

¹⁹ Tarn 1956, 3; see Anson 2013, 81 in support of Antipater’s stance on Alexander.

²⁰ Badian 1963, 244-50; 2000, 54-6.

²¹ Cartledge 2005, 63-65, 13.

²² Renault 1975, 62-63; his success was hardly a foregone conclusion; see Anson 2013, 79.

²³ See Anson 2013, 79.

²⁴ See Fredricksmeier 2003, 253 ff.

and Cleopatra might be born a legitimate successor to the kingdom” thus insulting Alexander who became livid at the remarks.²⁵ Plutarch reports that he was about to come to blows with Attalus when Philip, also very drunk, arose and drew his sword only to fall down and be subjected to Alexander’s ridicule, saying “Look now, men! Here is one who was preparing to cross from Europe into Asia; yet he is distressed in trying to cross from couch to couch!”²⁶ Alexander then took his mother to Epirus and went himself to Illyria in self-imposed exile.²⁷

The Pixodarus Affair is another incident that reveals tensions between father and son.²⁸ Alexander, with help from his closest friends, had derailed Philip’s plan to marry off his half-brother, Arrhidaeus, to the daughter of the Satrap of Caria by offering himself as bridegroom instead. Ruzicka places this episode as occurring while Alexander was still in Illyria, probably in 337.²⁹ Philip persuaded his son to return, although a number of the prince’s closest companions, including our Ptolemy, were sent into exile by the king for their unsanctioned involvement in foreign affairs. Contrary to Badian’s position, Philip appears to have thought very highly of his son, considering him unequivocally as heir-apparent.³⁰ Not only was Philip instrumental in obtaining his return to court, after putting a halt to any marriage arrangement with the Carian, but Alexander was also sufficiently important in his father’s eyes not to be pawned off on a minor Persian noble who had been a bitter enemy in 340. Philip had reserved that honour for his half-witted son Arrhidaeus, who was never intended to inherit the throne, in order to cement ties of friendship with a former opponent.³¹ It was a diplomatic manoeuvre typical of Philip and it speaks volumes that he forgave his son for scuppering the deal. Alexander’s position seems to have been fairly secure. Any child of the king by Attalus’ niece, however purely Macedonian, would be years from becoming a suitable successor, if it ever did; whereas, the half-Epirote Alexander, who had successfully acted as regent in his father’s absence at the age of sixteen and commanded the left wing of the Macedonian army at Chaeronea in 338, had proven himself fit for rule time and again. This was affirmed by his restoration to favour even after the episode with Attalus and the Pixodarus Affair. Family tensions and headstrong children are universal phenomena but they do not automatically equate to plots of murder.

Many others have added their voices to this “trial by historians” of Alexander and Olympias and it would take considerable time to go through them all. Mary Renault has even asserted that it would be a “waste of space to re-examine” the debate.³² That may be going a bit far but this case does serve to illustrate that one can, as Badian, Cartledge and others have done, construct an elaborate edifice of reasoned suspicion and supposition to back up a claim of complicity.³³ For example, Robin Lane Fox argues that “for Olympias, the murder had been timed and planned ideally; Philip was killed at the wedding designed to discard her”; he considers Alexander’s potential involvement too but argues that it amounts largely to “speculation”, saying that it is “Olympias who remains most suspect”.³⁴ If the allegation comes from Cleitarchus, as it appears to have done, then this view may have been derived from the gossip of the common soldiers, who probably were not privy to all the facts. It almost certainly derives from the time after Alexander when Cassander’s anti-Olympias propaganda may have also informed and influenced that gossip.³⁵ In addition to politically opposing Cassander, Olympias would execute his brother, Nicanor, claiming that she was avenging Cassander’s reputed involvement in her

²⁵ Plutarch *Alexander*, IX.4-5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Plutarch *Alexander*, IX.4-5; Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae*, 557d-e; Justin IX.7.2-5.

²⁸ Plutarch *Alexander*, X.1-3.

²⁹ Ruzicka 2010, 10, although this is contested; see his notes *passim*; and see Plutarch *Alexander*, IX.6.

³⁰ Ruzicka 2010, 8; see Worthington 2014, 113-15, who agrees that Alexander’s position was relatively secure.

³¹ See Anson 2013, 76-77.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Cartledge 2005, 16, 64 & *passim*.

³⁴ Fox 2004, 23-25; but see Carney 2006, 39 ff. for a fuller discussion this.

³⁵ See Waterfield 2011, 88-91.

son's demise.³⁶ It is noteworthy that Alexander himself was never implicated in the murder of his father during his lifetime, to our knowledge, even in the latter part of his Asiatic campaign when a number of his subordinates were accusing him of a great many wrongdoings.

The assassin Pausanias may not have acted alone, but “our sources primarily describe the murder as of a very personal nature”.³⁷ While it was successful, this could also explain why no higher, political goals were achieved such as bringing Philip's nephew, Amyntas Perdicca, son of the previous king and Philip's brother, Perdiccas III, to power.³⁸ It seems more like revenge than *coup d'état*. Pausanias was a royal bodyguard from Orestis who Diodorus indicates was at least at one point “beloved of the king” and apparently quite jealous of other would-be beloveds.³⁹ If true, then that establishes a special relationship between the murderer and his monarch that casts a particular light on Philip's failure to redress his outrage. According to Diodorus' version, Pausanias had fallen out of favour as the king's lover and then embarked on a smear campaign against his replacement, another youth also named Pausanias who was a friend of Attalus and who is reported to have died in a battle against the Illyrians.⁴⁰ Diodorus asserts that his death was actually suicide as a result of the other Pausanias' unbearable defamations against him.⁴¹ Perhaps out of a sense of outrage, Attalus “plied him with un-mixed drink” and handed the future regicide over to his mule drivers to have their way with him. This happened approximately eight years prior to Philip's assassination. Plutarch says the rapists were fellow “revellers” at the party; Diodorus refers to them as Attalus' “mule drivers”.⁴² They could have easily been both. Pausanias was a teenager and a Royal Page at that point rather than captain of the bodyguards, as he would be at the time of the murder.⁴³ He was also an aristocrat, with a high sense of personal worth and privilege. And he had been raped—not just raped, but drugged by a superior and gang-raped perhaps by social inferiors—and had received no justice from Philip who had been at once probably his lover and was unquestionably a “father figure” as his king and commander. In terms of the latter's declining to redress the wrong, possibly Philip felt that the slanderous youth had received his just desserts. Now, we cannot know what went through Pausanias' mind; but, a traumatic experience like that was bound to leave a profound impact and Diodorus' reports suggest he was given to emotional extremes. One may postulate that he nursed this grievance throughout the intervening years; he probably dwelt upon it to an unhealthy degree, let it eat away at him. We should perhaps feel some pity for Pausanias; although, there can be no justification for his actions.

We also cannot know whether Olympias, Alexander or others who knew of this took advantage through “poisoned” words of encouragement; but, the wedding at Aegae marked an acme in Philip's career and seeing his king at this moment, dressed in shining white robes, being honoured like a god at the height of his power and prestige, could have easily been the last proverbial straw. Pausanias might have got his revenge at any time, or never, but the moment was ripe for it. Some premeditation seems likely. He would have had time to prepare, being chief bodyguard and knowing the royal itinerary in detail. Diodorus' account suggests some planning as the assassin had horses readied for a swift getaway, failing to reach them in time only because he tripped on a vine in his precipitous flight and fell.⁴⁴ Justin alone, as indicated above, suggests that Olympias herself had organised the escape animals. If Diodorus is reporting correctly, then

³⁶ Diodorus XIX.11.8; see too Heckel 2006, 176-7.

³⁷ Anson 2013, 74; Aristotle *Politics*, 1311b1, supports Diodorus' position that Pausanias acted alone.

³⁸ Not being Argeads, any claim of theirs was tenuous, but they could have supported Amyntas who would have then been favourably disposed towards them; see Arrian *Events After Alexander* I.22; Justin XI.6.14; Polyaeus VIII.60 and Plutarch *Moralia*, 327c.

³⁹ Diodorus XVI.93.2-4.

⁴⁰ See Freeman 2011, 39-40.

⁴¹ Diodorus XVI.93.6; he called him an hermaphrodite, amongst other things.

⁴² Plutarch *Alexander*, 10; Diodorus XVI.93.2-4.

⁴³ Heckel 2006, 193-194.

⁴⁴ Diodorus XVI.94.3-4.

this was more than a sudden psychological episode and appears to have been planned to make Philip's fall all the more tragically ironic in the context of his celebratory accolades.

The apparent, summary execution of the regicide without trial might have been absolutely necessary in order to cement Alexander's position as heir-apparent; but he may not have had any choice in the matter. A murder had been witnessed by a multitude and the killer was manifestly guilty. Today we would expect a lengthy forensic investigation and trial by jury. Had Pausanias been spared at that moment for a future trial, on Alexander's order, this might have actually implicated Alexander in his crimes by providing the assassin with the opportunity for escape, which could well have happened.⁴⁵ Swift action seems to have been required—Pausanias was clearly “resisting arrest” by fleeing—and justice needed to be seen to have been done. We do not even know for certain that Alexander had anything directly to do with Pausanias' execution. Diodorus says that Perdikkas, Leonnatus and Attalus (probably the son of Andromenes, not Philip's father-in-law who was in Asia with Parmenion leading the spearhead invasion) killed him with javelins—and Alexander is not mentioned here amongst them.⁴⁶ Plutarch alludes to Alexander hunting down “others” considered to have been involved in the plot, suggesting there was a conspiracy of some kind; but, nowhere are we explicitly told that he personally ordered the killer's execution.⁴⁷

Pausanias was from Orestis, a region of upper Macedonia corresponding roughly to the modern-day Kastoria district, which had been assimilated by Philip after a series of bloody battles. Leonnatus has sometimes been thought to have also come from Orestis; however, Fox and Heckel have demonstrated that he was a relative of Eurydice, the mother of Philip II, and therefore a member of the Lycestian “royal line”, which itself had been thwarted in its aspirations for agnatic control of the crown of Macedon by Philip in his earlier rise to supremacy.⁴⁸ This Attalus was Perdikkas' brother-in-law and both men were nobles from Orestis. Conspiracy hunters may argue that they killed him to silence his bearing witness to their involvement in the plot which, given Perdikkas' eventual role as *somatophylax* of, and *diadochos* to, Alexander, could be seen to implicate him if true; but there is no proof of such a plot beyond the implication. Indeed, most of the individuals present amongst the royal retinue at Aegae on that day were probably related to each other in some way, whether by region, marriage or acquaintanceship of varying degrees and many of them probably had grievances against their king. Any or all of them may have had sufficient motive to participate in such a plot; but that alone does not condemn them. It is also unquestionably the case that more than one Macedonian monarch came to the throne by means of assassinating his predecessor but that too is insufficient to return a verdict on Alexander.⁴⁹ I would like to think that there is no evidence to convict him, or his mother, here. Perhaps I am afflicted by similar biases to those of Diodorus and Plutarch but I freely admit that, as Wood writes, “although it has never been proved, [it] is not impossible” that the twenty year-old prince was involved in some capacity.⁵⁰ The truth will likely never be known; but that will hardly stop historians from arguing over this matter and continuing to prosecute Alexander for the crime of parricide by proxy.

The legacy of Thebes' annihilation would resonate throughout Alexander's life and beyond; but, we must be careful not to judge him by later standards. It is also important to remember that he was only Alexander III of Macedon, an unproven successor to Philip II, when these events transpired. He was not yet Alexander the Great. Even so, this episode is one of the most

⁴⁵ A fragmentary source, *P. Oxy.* 1798, implies that Pausanias was actually tried and executed; but this is not borne out by our other sources, especially Justin XI.2.1; see. U. Wilcken 1923, 151 ff. for this position and see too Welles 1963, 101, n. 2, in his commentary on Diodorus XVI, for the refutation of it.

⁴⁶ Diodorus XVI.94.4

⁴⁷ Plutarch *Alexander*, X.4.

⁴⁸ Fox 2004, 505; Heckel 2006, 147.

⁴⁹ See Carney 2003, 235.

⁵⁰ Wood 1997, 32.

controversial in the Conqueror's career and would be a defining factor in his reception. In 335 B.C., whilst Alexander was putting down a revolt amongst the Illyrians and other northern tribesmen who had taken the opportunity of Philip's demise to challenge Macedonian hegemony, Thebes revolted from the League of Corinth, spurred on by Demosthenes in Athens and the rumour that Alexander had perished, not unlike his uncle Perdiccas III in 359, fighting the northerners.⁵¹ On hearing of this news, Alexander, very much alive, undertook a lightning march with his forces and arrived to besiege Thebes within a fortnight of their initial rebellion. The story is well known: Thebes refused to surrender; it was defeated; many of its male citizens of military age were put to death, the women and children sold into slavery and the city and its famous walls were razed to the ground apart from certain sacred sites along with the house of the poet Pindar. It may seem to us ironic that a similar doom had recently been inflicted upon the Thracian Getae on the far bank of the Danube, along with a number of other cities of the Thracians and Triballians, on Alexander's orders, according to Arrian by way of Ptolemy, and no one in Greece appears to have batted an eyelid at the lot of these "barbarians".⁵² Greeks were another matter. That Alexander would exact such a harsh penalty on the civilised sons of Hellas sent shockwaves throughout the land, echoing down the corridors of time. This both tarnished his reputation and, at once, reinforced his authority over the other League city-states pondering defection. Athens demurred further fomenting of dissent, at least overtly, and sought peaceful terms with Macedon and only Sparta and her allies, with Persian backing, would later undertake rebellion in 331, whilst Alexander was away campaigning in Asia.

The destruction of Thebes certainly resulted in much controversy and this is to be found in both the Vulgate and Official traditions of the primary sources. Arrian's account almost certainly derives from the lost *History* of Ptolemy and it offers one of the few occasions where we can be reasonably certain that the latter probably "fudged" the truth in order to slander a later opponent.⁵³ Arrian writes that, according to Ptolemy son of Lagus, Perdiccas began the assault on the city without orders, thus pre-empting whatever Alexander's plans might have been.⁵⁴ This is plainly contradicted by Diodorus who indicates that Alexander himself gave the order to attack.⁵⁵ Perdiccas would be Ptolemy's rival in the Wars of the Successors and so the future Pharaoh of Egypt undertook some creative character assassination by means of revisionist history.⁵⁶ Perhaps too Ptolemy sought to exonerate his friend and king to an extent by deflecting some of the onus onto an impatient subordinate; but, it can do little to exculpate Alexander for the eventual consequences of that attack. Ptolemy usually has no qualms about describing the fate of rebels in gory detail and Thebes is no exception.

Arrian also states that Alexander gave the Thebans multiple opportunities to back down from their revolt in order to treat with him diplomatically, but that they stubbornly refused.⁵⁷ This is corroborated by both Plutarch and Diodorus.⁵⁸ The latter source includes a substantial description of their refusal, adding treasonous language and expressions of Persian sympathies to the crimes of the rebels, saying that they invited the host of Macedonians and their Boeotian allies "to join the Great King and Thebes in destroying the tyrant of Greece".⁵⁹ Diodorus indicates that this enraged Alexander and may have influenced his eventual treatment of the conquered Thebans. Plutarch reports a similar statement of treason, imploring "all those who wished to liberate Greece" to rally to their side; although, he omits any reference to the Persians

⁵¹ See Cartledge 2005, 81 ff.

⁵² Arrian *Anabasis*, I.3-7; see Young 2014, 19-21.

⁵³ Young 2014, 24-26.

⁵⁴ Arrian *Anabasis*, I.8.1-3.

⁵⁵ Diodorus XVII.12.3.

⁵⁶ See Waterfield, 2012, *s.v.* Perdiccas.

⁵⁷ Arrian *Anabasis*, I.7-8.

⁵⁸ Plutarch *Alexander*, XI.7; Diodorus XVII.9.2-12.4

⁵⁹ Diodorus XVII.9.4-6.

here as allies against Macedonian hegemony.⁶⁰ Perhaps Diodorus inserted the allusion to the Persians in order to explain or justify the king's wrath against a city that proposed to side with the enemy, in keeping with his pro-Alexander bias, or perhaps some of the soldiers whom his source, Cleitarchus, interviewed in Alexandria recalled these statements being shouted from the walls by the city's defenders. Ptolemy could not have been everywhere on the battlefield and others would have seen and heard things that he missed. Justin/Trogus discusses Alexander's initial forbearance also stating, albeit in the rather simplified language of the *Epitome*, that the Thebans had "revolted from him to the Persians".⁶¹ It would be interesting to see what the missing books of Curtius Rufus would have added to this discussion because we have at least two sources from the Vulgate tradition that maintain Persian complicity. Cleitarchus again seems likely to have originated the historiography on this but, if there were any truth to it, why is it then absent from the Official tradition as it would have made for excellent propaganda?

Treasonous Thebans aside, Alexander's allies certainly appear to have played a major role in the aftermath. Diodorus names these as Thespians, Plataeans, Orchomenians and "some others hostile to Thebes"; Justin gives Phocians, Plataeans and Orchomenians; however Plutarch and Arrian only mention Phocians and Plataeans.⁶² Diodorus says that, after the Theban forces were routed, these Boeotian allies, much moreso than the Macedonians, ransacked the city for pillage and engaged in a general slaughter. They used the opportunity to give free reign to their vengeance, having built up many grievances from the time when they had been oppressed by the erstwhile Theban Hegemony.⁶³ Plutarch, Arrian and Justin agree with this interpretation. The crux of the matter, of course, is the decision of how to deal with the traitorous city-state once it was defeated. There is some notable contrast here in at least one primary source. After enumerating a range of past iniquities by Thebes, which included oppressing her subjects, aiding the Persians and voting to have Athens razed after its defeat by Sparta in 404, Arrian writes that:

The allied troops who had taken part in the fighting were entrusted by Alexander with the ultimate settlement of the fate of Thebes. They decided to garrison the Cadmeia, but to raze the city to the ground.⁶⁴

Diodorus gives a more detailed account but says essentially the same.⁶⁵ Justin also provides a fairly vivid (for him) narrative of the allies, listing their complaints against Thebes, of a Theban captive named Cleadas making a case for mercy, which was rejected, and of the Boeotian allies' final, wrathful decision to have the city destroyed, its territories parcelled out amongst them.⁶⁶ Plutarch breaks rank from these versions, saying that "the city was stormed, plundered and razed to the ground" as an example to "frighten the rest of the Greeks into submission", putting forth as an excuse that Alexander was also "redressing the wrongs done to his allies".⁶⁷ Unusually Plutarch, who is normally quite pro-Alexander, ascribes blame directly to him, citing the allies merely as a pretext, and this appears to have been more a view of his own rather than something explicitly stated in his sources. He also adds that Alexander felt "distressed" about Thebes in later years and that this made him "milder in the treatment of other peoples".⁶⁸ Hammond has reasonably demonstrated that Diodorus, Plutarch and Justin/Trogus are all using Cleitarchus as

⁶⁰ Plutarch *Alexander*, XI.4.1-4.

⁶¹ Justin *Epitome*, XI.2.7-8.

⁶² Diodorus XVII.135; Justin XI.3.8; Plutarch *Alexander* XI.5; Arrian *Anabasis* I.8.8.

⁶³ See Young 2014, 25; Fox 2004, 86-9.

⁶⁴ Arrian *Anabasis*, I.9.9.

⁶⁵ Diodorus XVII.14.1-4.

⁶⁶ Justin XI.4.1.

⁶⁷ Plutarch *Alexander*, XI.5.1-5

⁶⁸ Plutarch *Alexander*, XIII.2.3-4.

their main source for this episode and, if so, then the differences would seem to be largely down to individual interpretations.⁶⁹

As is perhaps to be expected, modern historians have had a field day with the destruction of Thebes. Those who seek to vilify Alexander seize upon it as proof positive of his tyranny. Others seek to rationalise it; but, even his apologists struggle with the doom visited upon the city of Cadmus. It is interesting that the similar fate of the Getae tends to get little mention by either camp and this seems to indicate a pro-Hellenic prejudice, perhaps even unconsciously, having been transmitted down through the dusty annals of history from the primary sources. Tarn states that, while the king left the decision to the League of Corinth, the only members present were enemies of Thebes and so “the responsibility lies with Alexander”.⁷⁰ He also considers the destruction of Thebes to have been one of the most “terrible crimes on his record”, alongside the murder of Parmenion and the treatment of Massaga; but, he also cautions that only those who have known the “temptations of power can judge”.⁷¹ He does place the responsibility entirely on Alexander, though, and clearly considers it to have been a tragic mistake. Fox, who advised Oliver Stone on the 2004 film, is perhaps one of the most objective and thorough of Alexander scholars in his research; he may no less be inclined to favour a more positivist version of Alexander at times. Yet, he also regards the decision to have been Alexander’s, discussing the same range of arguments mitigating Thebes’ destruction due to the Boeotians, concluding that the “allies would naturally have decreed their approval of an act which they were too frightened to condemn”.⁷² Cartledge is more forthright, saying that “the order was given, formally on the decision of the Council of the League of Corinth but really at Alexander’s behest (we may safely infer)”.⁷³ He considers this to have been a case of *Realpolitik* and elaborates that “Alexander decided to cow into submission by an act of extreme political violence the allies whose anti-Persian crusade he was supposed to be leading”, revealing the true face of the twenty-one year-old king, indicating that he only gave lip-service to his much vaunted policy of Pan-Hellenism when it suited him.⁷⁴ This comes across as a kind of more extreme take on Plutarch’s interpretation, echoing the same sentiments however enlarged.

Plutarch and Arrian’s philosophical leanings might permit them to forgive Alexander when he regretted the fate of Thebes, but not Paul Cartledge; although, considering that he has mainly written on the Spartans, whose opinion of the Conqueror is well known, it is possible to hypothesise that their predisposition may have influenced his interpretation, which typically inclines more towards that of “Alexander the Tyrant”. And this view is by no means isolated, although it varies by degrees between scholars in terms of the extent of culpability ascribed. Worthington, for example, considers this one of the “darkest episodes” in the king’s career; even so, while placing the blame squarely on Alexander, who he says used the allies to deflect personal responsibility, he also points out that Thebes may have been harbouring Amyntas Perdicca, a rival for the Macedonian throne.⁷⁵ Treacherous disloyalty could expect such rewards and Philip II had visited a similar fate on Olynthus because they had given quarter to two of his step-brothers who also claimed the crown. Andrew Young’s outstanding work reconstructing the lost book of Ptolemy argues that the latter sought to re-focus blame onto the Boeotian allies. He ultimately sides with Plutarch’s view that Alexander knew exactly what would become of Thebes and fully endorsed it. Young points out that in all other conflicts north and east, “in every other account throughout the campaigns it was Alexander who made the decision on what to do with a given city after being taken”; the fate of Thebes being determined by the League of Corinth in

⁶⁹ Hammond 2007, 24-27.

⁷⁰ Tarn 1956, 7.

⁷¹ Tarn 1956, 125.

⁷² Fox 2004, 88.

⁷³ Cartledge 2005, 57.

⁷⁴ Cartledge 2005, 82.

⁷⁵ Worthington 2014, 134-5.

whatever form, he argues, “stands out as possibly apocryphal”.⁷⁶ Young considers it unusual to portray Alexander as “barely in control of the situation”, passing the decision over to vengeful allies. Even if that were true, he argues, the king must have known what the outcome would be beyond any shadow of doubt.

Even so, Mary Renault sees Thebes as an exception in a number of ways. She asserts that Alexander could have personally decided the fate of a captured city in Thrace, Illyria or Asia where his authority was absolute.⁷⁷ Thebes was different. Apart from Chaeronea (338 B.C.), which predates the League of Corinth, this was the only occasion on which Alexander campaigned personally against League-member Greeks who were not mercenaries in the pay of the Persian king. This and the wars conducted in response to the provocations of the Spartans, who were in collusion with Persia, by his regent Antipater in *ca.* 331, as Worthington writes, “were the first and only punitive actions carried out in defence of the Common Peace treaty by the general body of the signatories after decisions reached by a set procedure”.⁷⁸ Thebes had manifestly reneged on its oath to the League by attacking the Macedonian garrison in the Cadmeia and was in open rebellion.⁷⁹ Failure to settle the matter with Thebes, and to settle it sharply, could have entailed severe repercussions for the unity of the League of Corinth, not to mention the problems it would have posed to Alexander’s premiership.

The influence of the other League members present at Thebes should not be dismissed. Renault states:

...the Thebans were familiar enemies, against whom generations of hatred had been stored. Before Philip’s intervention, the Phocian War had been marked with heinous savageries. The atrocities of the lately betrayed Plataeans, if anyone’s fault but their own, may most fairly be blamed upon Demosthenes.⁸⁰

The latter, in his *de facto* capacity as leader of Athens, had urged Athenian involvement and reportedly supplied arms to the Phocians, Plataeans and others against Macedon.⁸¹ These highly relevant past grievances aside, Alexander’s relationship with the League of Corinth was different from that with other political players. It perhaps comes down to the issue of whether the League was only a sinecure or whether Alexander took this special relationship seriously—again, whether he was a tyrant or otherwise. The fact that he limited his actions to mainly dealing with insurrections rather than micro-managing their societies, as Cassander and other Successors would do, suggests something different from tyranny. Make no mistake here: the Common Peace of the League of Corinth favoured Macedon and its king; yet, Alexander III appears to have respected the traditions and autonomy of individual Greek *poleis*—insofar as they behaved themselves within the strictures of the treaty. He was surely an autocrat in Asia, but a nominally constitutional monarch, albeit with extraordinary discretion, in Macedon and Greece.⁸²

Arrian says that Alexander arrived at Thebes, by his lightening march, with his “whole force”.⁸³ How large was this force and how many troops were there from the allies? Arrian does not give precise figures, apart from 2,000 Agrianes and archers, for whom Alexander had sent whilst fighting the northern tribes and which, along with the remainder of his forces from those

⁷⁶ Young 2014, 25-26.

⁷⁷ Renault 1975, 79.

⁷⁸ Worthington 2007, 75.

⁷⁹ See Anson 2013, 132-3 and below; see Rhodes and Osborne 2007, 373 for a surviving example of the oath in the form of an inscription from Athens.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Of note here is the fact that Callisthenes, our next major theme, wrote a pro-Macedonian account of the Phocian War, probably with a view to patronage under Philip; see. Jacoby, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, II B 124, T 25 from Cicero’s *Ad Familiares*, V.12.2.

⁸¹ Worthington 2007, 34 details these conflicts; see Demosthenes *Oration* 57 and Plutarch *Life of Demosthenes*, 12.

⁸² See Worthington 2007, 75-80.

⁸³ Arrian I.7.6.

struggles, were presumably present at Thebes.⁸⁴ Diodorus offers a figure of 30,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry, “all seasoned veterans”, which might be an exaggeration but it is difficult to say by how much.⁸⁵ We neither know how many of the allies were present nor how many defenders held Thebes; but, a well-defended strongpoint almost always has the initial advantage in siege warfare and Diodorus comments that the Thebans, though outnumbered, were “superior in bodily strength” due to their constant practicing in their *gymnasia*.⁸⁶ Plutarch and Diodorus both agree that 6,000 Theban soldiers died as a result of the battle.⁸⁷ They disagree on the number sold into slavery, with Plutarch giving 20,000 and Diodorus 30,000, and it is unclear how many of these were non-combatants. Diodorus says that Alexander realised 440 talents of silver (about 11,440 kg) from their sale but this does not clarify the number or type of prisoners taken.⁸⁸ Neither do we know how many Thebans escaped. Diodorus mentions a “a gift of weapons” and heavy armour to the Thebans from Demosthenes in Athens, but no reinforcements, along with some troops coming from the Peloponnesians who waited at the isthmus but did not join in the struggle; and he also mentions that the Thebans were using their recently enfranchised slaves in defence.⁸⁹ Alexander’s forces, including the allies, surely outnumbered the Thebans; although, the numbers may have been close and the defenders had some advantages that might have offset this if only to some degree.

What does seem certain, despite the lack of clarity about exact numbers, is that the Greeks were divided in their support of Alexander, whether philosophically or in actuality. The Athenians and Spartans were anti-Alexander (and the latter were not League members) but chose to “wait and see” the outcome of the battle before committing troops. It appears that many other Greek *poleis* took a similar tack. The Boeotian allies were clearly supporting Alexander in his cause, albeit perhaps on account of their past relations with the Thebans. This was no academic debate; although, it very much reflects the shape of such debates that would issue from these events. And the case could be made that by “voting with their feet”, so to speak, the Boeotian allies had earned the right to determine the fate of Thebes, in League Council alongside the Macedonians and their *hegemon*, whereas the others, if only by being conspicuously absent, had not. Thebes had broken her oath to the League, which had been made to “Philip or his heirs”, to maintain the Common Peace; those who sent arms were also in violation for helping the rebels and those who did not send aid to Alexander “to make war against transgressors” who broke the oath could be seen as likewise in violation.⁹⁰ Granted, on the issue of aid, the oath specified that it should be rendered if requested, and we do not know who was requested to help or who was not, so that might to a point exonerate any who did not participate in punishing Thebes without being asked.

So what if Alexander knew how the League members present would vote; does that make him personally responsible for the fate of Thebes? Anson agrees that it was a League decision but states that “it is clear that Alexander could have saved the city if he wished”.⁹¹ But could he? Had he not gone along with their decision, then he might have been faced with an army of disaffected allies, with hostile Arcadians waiting just round the corner and a range of other *poleis* looking for an opportunity to pounce. One might expect, with Arrian’s military background, that he would have made this same argument; although, perhaps his source, Ptolemy, played down the prospect for propagandistic reasons, emphasising the cowing of any

⁸⁴ Arrian I.6.10.

⁸⁵ Diodorus XVII.9.3.1-4.

⁸⁶ Diodorus XVII.11.4.7-9

⁸⁷ Plutarch *Alexander* 11.12; Diodorus XVII.14.1.1-4.

⁸⁸ The same figure may be found in a fragment of Cleitarchus (Athenaeus IV.148d-f; Jacoby, *F. Gr. H.*, no. 137, F 1), but this applies to the total wealth of the city itself and the price of slaves at this time is far from certain.

⁸⁹ Diodorus XVIII.8.5-6.

⁹⁰ Seen Anson 2013, 132-3; Diodorus XVI.89; Justin IX.5.

⁹¹ Anson 2013, 124.

aims at broader rebellion through Thebes' crushing defeat.⁹² But Alexander might have easily found himself with battle-exhausted troops besieged in the very city that he had just conquered, its defences now spent, cut off from any timely resupply and facing a general revolt in Greece. The stakes were that high. I am not making this case to justify the razing of Thebes; I do so merely to illustrate how a complex solution obtained for an equally complex problem that was definitely not to everyone's satisfaction, but which addressed this unique situation in a comprehensible way. It was *Realpolitik*, however dismal the consequences. Had Athens or any other city-state truly wanted to save Thebes, then they should have been present to exert their influence in one capacity or another.

The fall of Callisthenes of Olynthus is the third and final episode to be considered in depth here. It too is particularly fraught with historiographical issues and inconsistencies. Those notwithstanding, it also appears to have opened the floodgates of scholarship on a major academic debate concerning Alexander. Callisthenes was either Aristotle's nephew or grand-nephew. He was known for his antiquarian tendencies but was well-published on historical subjects and the natural sciences, in keeping with both Aristotle and Alexander's interests, prior to taking up his post with the latter as well as having made a name for himself through the patronage and prominent relationship with the former.⁹³ Callisthenes had been either a fellow student or more likely Aristotle's "teaching assistant" at the Shrine of the Nymphs in Mieza (between 343 B.C. and 340 B.C.) where Alexander studied. He would have been well-acquainted with his future master, along with his closest Companions, from the time that Alexander was about thirteen. Callisthenes had been cultivating his connections with Macedon for years and must have been pleased to have been invited as official historian on the Asiatic expedition. He is reported to have stated rather pompously that he went along in order to make Alexander's reputation, not his own.⁹⁴ Since this anecdote comes from Arrian by way of Ptolemy, the aspersion against the historian's character is necessarily suspect, though not beyond belief. Tarn's position is that, in the propaganda wars that accompanied the Wars of the Successors, the Peripatetic School, patronised by Cassander, had sought revenge for Callisthenes' treatment through advancing the argument of Alexander the "lucky tyrant". This stood in marked contrast to the idealised position of Alexander the "civiliser", put forward by his proponents. Neither view should be dismissed and that is not my intention here; even so, "each is a judgement after the event on Alexander the Conqueror and...each suffers from oversimplification".⁹⁵ As stated, these positions, in one form or another however transmuted throughout time, remain with us still, figuring prominently into virtually all subsequent receptions of Alexander. Such was perhaps the price for the punishment inflicted upon a well-connected scholar, whatever his degree of culpability for the crime of which he was accused. And that crime, much as with Pausanias and the Thebans, was no less than treason.

It was exceedingly far-sighted of Alexander to bring along an historian to chronicle his activities on the march. Would that this work, however flatteringly written it is purported to have been, had survived intact to the current era. Be that as it may, Callisthenes left his indelible mark on the history and reception of these crucial times. Despite Alexander's considerable official activity, he would have likely cultivated a close rapport with his personal historian, probably scrutinising his work before the instalments were relayed back to the homeland.⁹⁶ It is difficult to say what sort of relationship the two men may have had outwith Callisthenes' professional role; although, we do have Plutarch's report that scholar and monarch engaged in sophisticated games

⁹² Arrian I.8-9.

⁹³ See Brown 1949, 229, n.19 and Heckel 2006, 76-7.

⁹⁴ Arrian IV.10.2

⁹⁵ Brown 1949, 226.

⁹⁶ Brown 1949, 234; see Jacoby "Kallisthenes", *R.-E.*, 1919, X, 2, col. 1678, for the generally accepted position that Callisthenes' *History* was sent back in instalments.

of poetic “verse-topping”, which seems amiable enough but may have also entailed some element of mutual animosity.⁹⁷ It is noteworthy that Arrian reports that Callisthenes comforted Alexander after his drunken slaying of his friend and Companion Cleitus the Black, which does suggest that some “cordial relations existed between the two men”.⁹⁸ It is difficult to determine Arrian’s source on this and it may well have been Callisthenes himself which would then necessarily be questionable. It is also possible to speculate that the Greek *literati* were regarded with some contempt in Alexander’s camp, not by the king himself and his closest Companions whose interests were broad and liberal, but by many of his Macedonian associates. The surviving fragments of Ptolemy suggest little interest in Greek “high culture” amongst most of their nobles and it is noteworthy that, at least in Curtius Rufus’ account, the condemned traitor Philotas had to defend himself for favouring Greek cultural traditions over Macedonian ones.⁹⁹ This sort of attitude may have caused Callisthenes to feel like an unwelcome outsider from the beginning of the expedition and probably worsened with the passing of time.

The two occasions on which Callisthenes is reported to have refused *proskynesis* and, in the second instance was denied a kiss from the king, suggests friction at least between the two at that stage, if this is not revisionist propaganda. *Proskynesis* was a Persian custom appropriate to the King of Kings, who was not regarded as a living god (rather, he was Ahura Mazda’s vicar on earth), but which was problematic for the Greeks inasmuch as such deference was the reserve of divinity alone. Although, that too is contested.¹⁰⁰ Plutarch and Arrian both agree that Callisthenes acted tactlessly on numerous occasions, giving too loud a voice to his criticisms.¹⁰¹ According to the former, Aristotle even weighed in with some advice by post, having been informed of his relation’s liberality of speech, advising greater caution. During a verbal sparring match performed at the behest of the king, Plutarch indicates that the historian was asked to be critical of the Macedonians, whom he had just praised to much applause as part of the same sophistic display. Callisthenes, whose home city had been razed by Philip in 348, its population along with their Athenian allies being sold into slavery, “spoke long and boldly in his palinode...pointing out that Philip’s rise to power had occurred due to faction and division amongst the Greeks”, and this did not go down well with the assembled company.¹⁰² Arrian does not mention this conversation in his *Anabasis* but offers some further details about the historian’s arrogance and criticisms, including a negative attitude toward Alexander’s growing Orientalism. He also reports anecdotally of a conversation between Philotas, himself eventually implicated for complicity in a murder plot against the king, and Callisthenes in which the latter praised the Athenian tyrant slayers, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and strongly implied that such a one in their day would surely be given sanctuary in any Greek community that he liked, and moreover “that he would be safe in Athens”.¹⁰³ This must come from Ptolemy’s *History* and has the scent of revisionism about it, setting up both Philotas and Callisthenes for their future betrayals. The account of the palinode in Plutarch is considered by Jacoby to derive from Hermippus and Stroebeus.¹⁰⁴ We know next to nothing about Stroebeus but Hermippus, late 3rd century B.C., was directly influenced by the Peripatetic school and, as Tarn has emphasised, was hostile to Alexander.¹⁰⁵

According to Arrian and Plutarch, on one occasion (likely in Marakanda/Samarkand, in 327) Alexander passed round a “loving cup” (a *phiale*, associated with religious libations) and

⁹⁷ Plutarch *Alexander*, 53-4.

⁹⁸ Brown 1949, 240; Arrian IV.8-9.

⁹⁹ Curtius Rufus *History*, VI.10.23; see Brown 1949, 234.

¹⁰⁰ Badian 1996, 22 argues that neither Persians nor Greeks saw it as an act of worship.

¹⁰¹ Plutarch *Alexander* 53-56; Arrian IV.10-15.

¹⁰² Plutarch *Alexander* 53.4. He also quoted a proverb in hexameter verse, sometimes attributed to Callimachus. Cf. the *Nicias* XI.3; *Morals* 479a.

¹⁰³ Arrian IV.10.6

¹⁰⁴ Jacoby “Kallisthenes”, R.-E., 1919, X, 2, col. 1681.

¹⁰⁵ Tarn 1930, 255-256. Stuart 1928, 177, also notes that Hermippus was not above citing fictitious authorities.

those who had agreed to prostration took a sip, bowed and then received a kiss from the king.¹⁰⁶ Plutarch adds another version that states that they bowed before an altar (*estia*) rather than to the king himself. Callisthenes took a sip from the cup but, whilst Alexander was distracted in talking with Hephaestion, did not bow but approached the king to receive his kiss. His omission was reported by one of the Companions (Demetrius, son of Pythonax, in both versions) and Alexander refused to kiss him. It seems somewhat hypocritical of Callisthenes that he declined *proskynesis* given that surviving fragments of his work indicate that he had already been preparing the Greeks for Alexander's deification, which to them would justify prostration.¹⁰⁷ It does suggest that Callisthenes perhaps resented having to produce his overly flattering, non-academic "vanity" piece for Alexander, if it was that.

Whether, as Brown argues, Callisthenes' end was inevitable from this point and "Alexander controlled himself and awaited a more favourable opportunity" to remove him, after the historian had finished his *opus*, remains uncertain.¹⁰⁸ Cartledge agrees with Brown here, saying that his "recalcitrance had been noted, and it seems that Alexander was just waiting for a suitable opportunity to do away with him".¹⁰⁹ "Callisthenes sealed his fate", Freeman chimes in chorus, adding that Alexander only had to wait for the right time to silence him forever.¹¹⁰ How can they know this? Callisthenes had apparently "managed to prevent Alexander from permanently introducing the ritual of *proskynesis* among his Macedonian followers".¹¹¹ Following the historian's objections, and the Macedonians' favourable response to them, we are told that the policy of *proskynesis* was abandoned as untenable amongst the Greeks, though permitted for the Persians.¹¹² Perhaps Alexander held a grudge for this check on his authority; but, it was the traditional privilege of the Macedonians to have the king take their complaints seriously, and his wrath, if any, would not have been limited to Callisthenes alone.¹¹³ There is no definitive proof that he meditated murder at this stage. None of the primary sources explicitly tell us what Alexander was thinking. Like so much of the historiography around these events, the gaps have been filled with inference and innuendo.

The account of the refused kiss is strikingly similar in both Arrian and Plutarch. Hammond asserts that both took what elements they wanted of this episode from Chares of Mytilene.¹¹⁴ The latter was a Greek who had been appointed court-marshal or "introducer of strangers" to the king, an office borrowed from the Persian court. He wrote a *History* of Alexander in ten books, containing many personal details, the fragments of which are mostly preserved in Athenaeus of Naucratis' antiquarian *Deipnosophistae* (end of A.D. 2nd/beginning of A.D. 3rd century). Chares' *History* was concerned in the main with court ceremonies and personal gossip, including Alexander's abortive attempt at introducing the Persian custom of *proskynesis*.¹¹⁵ If Arrian had been unambiguously following Ptolemy or Aristobolus in reporting these events, then we might have cause to suspect their authenticity. The fact that both he and Plutarch recount the same tale from Chares perhaps suggests some likelihood that Callisthenes' refusal of prostration occurred in reality, that is unless Chares also partially or wholly fabricated it.

There is sufficient reason to believe that Callisthenes was critical of his monarch both in public and in private. His alleged involvement in the Conspiracy of the Pages, resulting in his demise, is in connection with this. Arrian and Plutarch describe the disaffection of the Royal Pages, led by one Hermolaus, son of Sopolis, who was interested in philosophy and, in

¹⁰⁶ Brown 1949, 243 ff. thinks that this was what ultimately served to condemn Callisthenes.

¹⁰⁷ See Jacoby *F. Gr. H.*, II B, 124, F 14a, b.

¹⁰⁸ Brown 1949, 245.

¹⁰⁹ Cartledge 2005, 73.

¹¹⁰ Freeman 2011, 264-5.

¹¹¹ Freeman 2011, 265.

¹¹² Arrian IV.10.3-12.1; Plutarch *Alexander* 54.4-6; see Anson 2013, 112-111.

¹¹³ See Adams 1986, 32-52 on the Macedonians' special relationship with their monarch.

¹¹⁴ Hammond 2007, 96-97.

¹¹⁵ Hammond, and Scullard, 1970, 227.

consequence, is said to have had some kind of close relationship with Callisthenes.¹¹⁶ Hermolaus was humiliatingly flogged after slaying a charging boar during a hunt in Bactria in 327, whose killing was to have been reserved for Alexander. Hunting was considered an important part of the liberal education afforded to the Royal Pages in exchange for service to their king, and so too were courtly manners. Hermolaus had overstepped the bounds and was accordingly punished.¹¹⁷ Also despairing of their king's Orientalising tendencies, we are told that the youths, led by an outraged Hermolaus, decided to murder Alexander but the plot was foiled through either an accident or divine intervention, depending on what one chooses to believe, and somehow Callisthenes was implicated.

This is where the accounts differ, with the Official and Vulgate traditions unsurprisingly disagreeing on the issue of testimony against the historian. Arrian tells us that both Aristobolus and Ptolemy declare "that the boys said that Callisthenes urged them to commit the crime".¹¹⁸ He adds, however, that "most sources" do not mention this. Plutarch, by contrast, writes that "even under the ordeal of torture, not one of Hermolaus' accomplices denounced Callisthenes" and that Alexander wrote in a letter to his generals Craterus, Attalus and Alectas stating that the boys claimed the conspiracy was none other than their own doing.¹¹⁹ Curtius Rufus, following Cleitarchus, gives a much fuller if sensationally elaborated account. Rufus states categorically that "Callisthenes was certainly not named as one involved in the plot" although he says that the historian did have regular communications with Hermolaus, counselled him after the flogging incident to remember that he was a man (whether merely as a comfort or as a call to arms is unclear), imputing that Callisthenes probably, through heavy implication, vented some of his criticisms of tyranny *vis-à-vis* Alexander in the presence of the impressionable youth and his peers.¹²⁰ Rufus does not give his source here; indeed, he rarely ever mentions his sources and in the instance of Callisthenes' reputed counsel it is "some say"; but, he is probably following Cleitarchus.¹²¹ Justin's *Epitome* of Trogus connects the historian's fate to his refusal of *proskynesis*, simply saying that "his opposition proved fatal, both to himself and to other eminent Macedonians, who were all put to death on the pretence that they were engaged in a conspiracy".¹²² This is surely an interpretation; although, given the consistency amongst Vulgate sources, it may ultimately derive from Cleitarchus. The story is missing in *lacunae* from Diodorus, although alluded to in his introduction to Book XVII, and we may assume it to have been similar to Rufus' elaborated version, based on their common source.

The actual death of Callisthenes is a subject of much debate. Aristobolus, according to Arrian, wrote that the historian was dragged in chains wherever the army went and eventually died when his health gave way. Ptolemy, by contrast, reported that he was tortured and hanged. One can readily imagine Arrian wringing his hands in frustration at these contradictory versions when he declares "so we see that even the most trustworthy of writers, men who were in fact with Alexander at the time, have related conflicting accounts of infamous events with which they must have been perfectly familiar".¹²³ He also mentions that there are many other conflicting reports of his death. Rufus says that Callisthenes died under torture, editorialising that "he was innocent of any plot to kill the king, but the sycophantic quality of courtly life did not suit his

¹¹⁶ Arrian IV. 13-14; Plutarch *Alexander* 55.

¹¹⁷ See Cohen 2010, 131.

¹¹⁸ Arrian IV.14.3.1-2

¹¹⁹ Plutarch *Alexander* 55.3.1-3.

¹²⁰ Curtius Rufus *History*, VIII.6-7.

¹²¹ See Heckel's introduction to Curtius Rufus *History* 2001, 6ff. Rufus only mentions Cleitarchus twice (IX.5.21 and IX.8.15); he refers to Ptolemy and one Timagenes of Alexandria (both at IX.5.21); little is known about the latter except that he came to Rome from Alexandria in about 55 B.C.

¹²² Justin XII.7.1-3.

¹²³ Arrian IV.14. See Cartledge 2005, 263 ff. and Fox 2004, 323 ff. for their attempts to disambiguate the death of Callisthenes.

nature”.¹²⁴ Plutarch says that “some accounts” indicate he was hanged, others that he was “clamped in irons and died of an illness”. Although, he also gives Chares of Mytilene’s version which states that Callisthenes was imprisoned for seven months “in order that he be tried by the Council of the League of Corinth, in the presence of Aristotle” but that he died in prison “of extreme corpulence and the disease of lice”.¹²⁵

There is substantial indication amongst the primary sources that Callisthenes had been critical of Alexander and that he indirectly encouraged the conspiracy against the king. Unlike his kinsman Aristotle, whose tuition of Alexander had been paid through the reconstitution of his home *polis* of Stageira, which itself had also been destroyed by Philip in 348, Callisthenes had no such redress for his annihilated fatherland. Perhaps he still felt bitter. Complaints of his being overly critical of his king were made by his detractors.¹²⁶ Rufus comments that “it was agreed that Callisthenes would lend a ready ear to the Pages’ criticisms and accusations” and Arrian says that his accusers were eagerly believed when they declared his part in the plan, with some saying that “he himself urged them on in their plotting”; Plutarch writes that Lysimachus and Hagnon, both high-ranking Macedonian nobles, asserted that the historian had been vocally airing his views against despotism to all of the pages who adored him, treating him as if he were the only “free man” amongst them.¹²⁷ It is unclear which source these three authors are using here but they appear to have obtained the allegations from a single writer, given their consistency. Plutarch also cites a letter, written at a later date, from Alexander to Antipater, his regent in Macedon, indicating that the Pages were executed by the Macedonians, but saying “I will punish the sophist and those who sent him...along with those who shelter my enemies in the city-states”.¹²⁸ Both Brown and Hammond consider this letter to be genuine; Hamilton argues, though, that it refers to “new evidence” which came to light incriminating Callisthenes.¹²⁹

But is the letter genuine? Or, if so, could it have been referring to a different “sophist”? Plutarch clearly believes that it related to Callisthenes; but there is room for doubt. In terms of his fate, Hammond argues that Chares’ version of imprisonment with a view to a trial “is probably to be believed, because he was a Greek at court and his account was circumstantial”; he adds that the captivity of Callisthenes was “developed by later writers into a tale of horror”, adding that to be lousy is not in itself debilitating.¹³⁰ The conditions of his detention were not necessarily harsh since we are told that Alexander of Lyncestis, Antipater’s son-in-law who was thrice implicated in another plot against the king, was arrested in 334/3 and held prisoner for several years prior to his execution in 327.¹³¹ And he did not die in prison under similar circumstances. Sifting through these diverse and greatly distorted versions, it looks like Callisthenes was perhaps too free in giving his opinions about Alexander, if not actually guilty of direct treason; although, that remains unproven. This may have encouraged the Pages in their attempt. He was probably not executed and he likely died in prison of an unknown illness whilst awaiting trial. Given the doubt as to his direct involvement, along with his familial and scholarly associations, a trial by a League tribunal in Greece would seem the most prudent, not to mention strategic, approach.

However Callisthenes actually met his end, it appears to have resulted in an academic bombshell that set the tone of virtually all future debates about Alexander. Indeed, had

¹²⁴ Curtius Rufus VIII.8.21.

¹²⁵ Plutarch *Alexander* 55.7; see Worthington 2007, 274-5; Renault 1975, 160-1, ignores Plutarch here and believes that Alexander had the historian executed, “making no distinction between the theorist killer and the man with the knife”.

¹²⁶ See Hammond 2007, 98-99.

¹²⁷ Rufus VIII.6.24 ff; Arrian IV.12.7; Plutarch *Alexander* 55.2.

¹²⁸ Plutarch *op. cit.* 55.

¹²⁹ Hamilton 1961, 16.

¹³⁰ Hammond 2007, 98-100, esp. n. 23.

¹³¹ See Nawotka 2010, 144-145; Curtius Rufus VII.1.6-7, VIII.8.6; Diodorus XVII.32.2 reports him bound and imprisoned awaiting trial in comparable terms as Callisthenes.

Alexander known the consequences, he might have redoubled his efforts to preserve the disgraced historian as “the men of the Academy and the Lyceum now sank their rivalries to execrate in concert the martyrdom of free-minded philosophy”, or so says Mary Renault, echoing Tarn.¹³² The immediate impact on the Peripatetic School is clearly indicated in this fragment quoted by Cicero:

Mourning the death of his friend, Theophrastus...says that Callisthenes fell in with a very powerful and fortunate man, but one who did not understand how to use his good fortune.¹³³

This criticism perhaps seems mild, *prima facie*, but this purported deficit on Alexander’s part here could be seen as particularly scornful by the philosophically inclined. Tarn’s argument is that the position developed to the effect that Alexander had certainly been very lucky, thus accounting for his successes, but was also a ruthless tyrant. This must have appealed to Cassander, who was intimately involved with both Athens and the Peripatetics who then, under his auspices, may have accordingly produced fitting scholarly invective in defence of their condemned colleague.¹³⁴

Stoneman plays down Tarn’s argument of the anti-Alexander rhetoric of the Peripatetics as potentially a “kind of category mistake”, contending that Alexander, due to his considerable impact on the popular imagination, provided a general subject for philosophical *exempla* on virtue and vice which would be carried on well into the Renaissance. He does at least admit that the death of Callisthenes “at the hands of a king is an event likely to impress other philosophers”.¹³⁵ Indeed, Mensching also disputed Tarn on the grounds of the limited, hard evidence of any Peripatetic backlash.¹³⁶ The evidence is limited although the circumstances are compelling. We have Pausanias’ report that Cassander, who had not participated in the Asian expedition apart from having been sent by his father Antipater as part of a deputation to Babylon in 323, close to the time of Alexander’s death, and who had been passed over as prospective regent by his own father, greatly disliked Alexander.¹³⁷ Diodorus also indicates that Olympias believed Cassander to have been complicit in Alexander’s death and that this in no small part was a major source of conflict between them.¹³⁸ What is more, in 317 BC, the oft-restored Athenian democracy fell, arguably for the final time before the modern era, and Cassander in his then capacity as King of Macedon and *hegemon* of the League of Corinth, which he had seized by force of arms and duplicity, took a step that Alexander does not seem to have contemplated, even though he had ample opportunity as well as cause. Cassander set up a puppet regime of oligarchs and appointed one Demetrius of Phaleron as their leader. Demetrius was an Aristotelian and the immediate student of Theophrastus, Aristotle’s successor, whose views probably harmonised with Cassander’s anti-Alexander position.¹³⁹ The Lyceum prospered under the patronage of the new regime. It also turned out to be fortunate for them, if Tarn is correct, that a negative agenda regarding Alexander was compatible with that of the ruling elites at the time.

The debate over “Alexander the Tyrant” arguably began with Demosthenes’ *Philippics*, if not before; but Callisthenes’ demise perhaps fuelled its “lift-off”, so much so that it is still going strong and has ever been since its inception. Others seem to have felt compelled to respond to this position and repudiate it. Tarn saw this as being deftly illustrated nearly four centuries later in Plutarch’s two epideictic speeches usually referred to as *On the Fortune and Virtue of Alexander*,

¹³² Renault 1975, 161.

¹³³ Cicero *Tusculum Disputationes*, III.21; see Jacoby 1929, *F. Gr. H.*, II B, 124, T 19b; and see Brown 1949, 225, n. 1.

¹³⁴ See Tarn 1939, in response to Fisch 1937.

¹³⁵ Stoneman 2003, 328-9.

¹³⁶ Mensching 1963, 274-282.

¹³⁷ Pausanias IX.7.2; see Carney 2006, 71-72.

¹³⁸ Diodorus XVIII.57.2

¹³⁹ See Waterfield 2011, 84-5. Theophrastus was probably working on his *Characters* during this period, which touched, albeit light-heartedly, on political issues relevant to Cassander’s regime.

in which he strives to refute the “lucky tyrant” thesis, in response to Greek literary and philosophical traditions that were well established by that point, through arguing that Alexander was a “philosopher in practice” in the truest sense and not always so “fortunate” as many might imagine.¹⁴⁰ One key passage discusses the Stoic cosmopolitanism of Zeno of Citium (*ca.* 334 – *ca.* 262 B.C.) and attributes the idea originally to Alexander, saying that the latter “ordered them to think of the whole inhabited world as their fatherland...all good men as their kinsmen”.¹⁴¹ This interpretation is in no small part the basis of Tarn’s positivist view of “Alexander the Civiliser” and so too had informed George Grote’s “Unity of Mankind” thesis; although, Schofield argues that it is in fact a “misreading” of the original Stoic doctrines.¹⁴² Tarn and Wardman saw these speeches as Plutarch making “a serious defence against attacks by Stoic philosophers” against Alexander; Hamilton opposes this, in part on grounds of contrast with the *Life of Alexander*, and Stoneman, essentially agreeing on the spirit of that position, takes a more circumspect approach.¹⁴³ Brown, whilst acknowledging that Tarn’s argument is based heavily on these two speeches of Plutarch, is mildly critical of Hamilton who he notes is self-consciously reiterating Badian’s views to the effect that that *On the Fortune and Virtue of Alexander* is merely “epideictic display” with no deeper purpose.¹⁴⁴

In addition to being clearly influenced by a Platonic approach to virtue, Plutarch’s work also fuses Roman ideas (*Humanitas* in particular) with Greek ones, forming a new reception of Alexander, although clearly derived from the original arguments, which is not surprising.¹⁴⁵ In a conversation with Sulochana Asrivatham, a fellow contributor to this volume, she related to me the view that these speeches of Plutarch likely represent one of his first attempts at academic writing (and Brown agrees on this point),¹⁴⁶ as evidenced in no small part by the *naïveté* of some of his arguments in comparison to the relative sophistication of his later works. This seems fitting. In my own “Images of Alexander” class, I set this same issue before my students and it is remarkable how, influenced by modern receptions, they also tend to fall into one of the two principal camps about the Conqueror, repeating and recycling essentially the same positions that have been bandied about and hotly contested since they sprang forth, like the evils of Pandora’s box, in the immediate aftermath of the Macedonian Conqueror. Much as with a Socratic dialogue, we can only achieve *aporia* here with recourse to these scholarly arguments, however well-constructed. It seems reductive but one only has to pick a side and the necessary scholarship will “flow” towards sustaining it. None of this clarifies the fate of Callisthenes or Alexander’s intentions. Their discernible impact on the scholarship, whatever Tarn and his proponents may argue, remains contentiously indeterminate, if albeit decidedly suggestive.

There are many, many more episodes that we could consider in examining the receptions of “Alexander the Civiliser” versus “Alexander the Lucky Tyrant”. These might include, but are by no means limited to, the sieges of Tyre and Gaza, the burning of the royal palace at Persepolis, the trial and execution of Philotas, the assassination of Parmenion, the slaughter of the Indian mercenaries, the Exiles’ Decree and the so-called “Reign of Terror” in *ca.* 321-323. Each is fraught with historiographical controversy, different versions in the sources and contrasting interpretations and receptions in the subsequent scholarship. Each one might serve to prove Alexander a tyrant or otherwise. Indeed, the episodes discussed in this chapter could have been dealt with in considerably more detail than I have had space to attend to here. But my aim was to use the examples of Philip’s assassination, the fate of Thebes and of Callisthenes in order to

¹⁴⁰ See Asrivatham 2005, 108-9.

¹⁴¹ Plutarch *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute*, 329a-d.

¹⁴² Tarn 1948, vol. 2, 399-499; Schofield 1991, 104-11.

¹⁴³ Stoneman 2003, 341; Tarn 1939; Wardman 1955, 96-107; Hamilton 1969, xxiii-xxxiii.

¹⁴⁴ Brown 1971, 352 ff.

¹⁴⁵ Asrivatham 2005 *passim*.

¹⁴⁶ Brown 1971, 352.

illustrate at once both the shape of the central debates concerning Alexander, along with some of their root causes and ramifications, as well as to offer my own reception, which is also an interpretation, of these events. In so doing I am well aware that I too have engaged in acts of insinuation and implication at least as much as those sources whom I have availed, while at the same time calling them to account when it seemed to me that they had erred through one form of prejudice or another. Doubtless others will requite my sins in kind.

As I have sought to demonstrate, scholars have been vehemently contesting the truth about Alexander since before his untimely death. Virtually all have done so under the sway of one type of agenda or another, as they continue to do. Taking all of that into account, what follows is the frame of the debate. We have no fully extant sources from primary witnesses, nor from Alexander himself, except in very limited, fragmentary and/or epistolary form, all of which are contested by modern scholarship to one degree or another, with those that are accepted being subject to many preconditions and interpretations. We do have the Greek-born, Roman general and governor Arrian of Nicomedia's selected, summarised and paraphrased elements drawn largely from Alexander's Companions, the Pharaoh and historian Ptolemy I Soter, son of Lagus, Aristobolus the engineer, Admiral Nearchus and sometimes Chares of Mytilene, "introducer of foreigners", along with a handful of others, most of whom were eyewitnesses but all of whom had various agendas of their own which often play out in their works. And much of that too is contested. We also have the Roman Quintus Curtius Rufus, probably writing in the reign of Claudius and influenced in his attitudes towards tyranny by Caligula and/or Nero, the Romanised Celt Trogus (by way of another, later Roman Justin) and the Sicilian-Greek Diodorus reporting on their receptions of mainly the Alexandrian scholar Cleitarchus, Chares again, the navigator *cum* "admiral" Onisicritus, the Peripatetic Callisthenes and a few others, some of whom were eyewitnesses but not most. Cleitarchus accessed some eyewitness accounts from Alexander's veterans; but all of the Vulgate sources, again, had contested agendas. It further complicates matters that both traditions share Callisthenes, to varying extents, as a primary source. And we have the Platonist Plutarch re-interpreting all of the above primary source, plus some more, through his philosophical lens and through the influence of *Romanitas*. We have the reported political propaganda of Cassander of Macedon along with scholarly positions, invectives, and their refutations, by Athenian and other intellectual elites. Virtually all of this derives from a positive or negative stance towards Alexander. They started the debate and we have it today through the receptions of Grote, Tarn, Badian, Renault, Cartledge, Fox *&c.* *&c.* *al.*, too many to name here, each influenced by events of their eras, each aligning with one side or another, in varying degrees, according to their dispositions and, to be sure, their scholarly acumen.

When St. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople (A. D. 347-407), asked his flock, "Tell me, where is the tomb (*sema*) of Alexander? Show it me and tell me the day on which he died", his purpose was to underscore the futility of a world in which even the greatest of individuals could be lost to history.¹⁴⁷ He was probably certain that no one at that time would be able to answer his question. To ask "Who is the real Alexander?" is surely begging to be met with a similar response. That is not to say that archaeologists will not one day locate his tomb, or that scholars may not at some time discover the "truth" about the Macedonian World Conqueror. For the moment, though, we are quite literally framed by the debate, caught up in its receptions and receptions of receptions, which are no less interesting than the truth and which go on to form their own kind of truth about those who make them and those who subscribe to them. Perhaps the real Greatness of Alexander resides in the fact that, through his earth-shatteringly monumental life and contentiously influential acts which divide us still in terms of their significance, he has held up a *speculum* in which we may, if nothing else, at least discover ourselves. And that is truly Great.

¹⁴⁷ *Homily XXIV on the 2nd Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians.*

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