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Part of the well-known 'Brill's Companions' series, Brill's Companion to the Reception of Alexander the Great was published in 2018, and was edited by Kenneth R. Moore, Senior Lecturer in the History of Ideas at Teesside University. The volume have 33 chapters, which deal with a wide range of subjects, focused in the reception of Alexander through history: from ancient authors to hellenistic art, from modern historiography to cinema. The work is divided in three parts: "Ancient Greek, Roman and Persian Receptions", "Later Receptions in the Near- and Far-East and the Romance Tradition", and "'Modern' and Postmodern Receptions".

The preface, by the volume's editor, explains that even the most famous literary sources for the study of Alexander - Diodorus, Quintus Curtius, Plutarch and Arrian - can be interpreted as reception, since all they were written 300 to 500 years after Alexander's death, and, most important, they are "product of his own era and cultural/historical context" (p. xix). Moore, moreover, stresses that the choice of the authors intents to include a vast variety of names, from academics with worldwide renown to recent PhDs, trying to "provide a fresh perspective" (p. xx).

Part 1 starts with "Framing the Debate", again by Moore. The chapter's aim is to look closely at three selected episodes of Alexander's career, the murder of Philip II (336 BC), the razing of Thebes by Alexander (335 BC) and the fate of Callisthenes of Olynthus (327 BC), in order to show the main problems concerning the textual transmission of these events (p. 4). Using a traditional approach, the german textual criticism of sources (*Quellenforschung*), alongside with a historiographical analysis, Moore denies Alexander's guilty in all episodes.

"Attic Orators on Alexander the Great" is written by Elias Koulakiotis, Assistant Professor at the University of Ioannina. Examining the works of

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Pseudo-Demosthenes, Demosthenes and Aeschines, Koulakiotis seeks to show these orators' interpretations on Alexander's matters concerning Greece and Athens. Koulakiotis' insightful conclusion is that the Attic orators' "greatest concern does not apply to the individual Alexander, but to the stylization of the figure of leader and conqueror as an archetype" (p. 62). Thus, Demosthenes saw Alexander as a threat to Athens' democratic regime, since the conqueror's acts subvert the "traditional political and social structures and values" (p. 63). For Aeschines, Alexander "represented the positive prototype of a new kind of citizen: (...) the perfect man (who) realizes the value-system of the polis" (p. 62).

"The Reception of Alexander's Father Philip II of Macedon", by Sabine Müller, Professor at Marburg University, is the third chapter. Müller's contribution is to demonstrate the changes on Philip's image through classical period. Starting with a positive view, seen as a 'true macedonian ruler' on the contrary of his son's 'persian policy', Philip, slowly, fades in Alexander's shadow, and his major role becomes to support the conqueror's greatness. In a way, this situation continues nowadays, so the chapter's central conclusion is: "Even when Philip was treated in his own right, the subject of Alexander was implicit and could not be avoided. Thus, no matter what image of Philip occurred, the label of being 'the father of Alexander the Great' was imprinted indelibly on the cultural memory" (p. 91).

"The Reception of Alexander in the Ptolemaic Dynasty" is the title of John Holton's chapter, Lecturer at Newcastle University. His principal aim is to "to explore the role of Alexander in the ideological self-fashioning of the Ptolemaic monarchs", using as a major source Theocritus' seventeenth Idyll, written c. 270 BC, and addressed to Ptolemy II Philadelphus (p. 98). Among other subjects, the poem shows Ptolemy I, Alexander, and Heracles as ancestors of the Ptolemaic royal line, reinforcing the dynasty's glorious past, and creating a positive view of Alexander's deeds (p.115).

"Alexander after Alexander: Macedonian Propaganda and Historical Memory in Ptolemy and Aristobulus' Writings" is written by Giuseppe Squillace, Associate Professor at the University of Calabria. Ptolemy and Aristobulus followed Alexander in the Asian campaign, providing an 'argument from authority' for their writings. However, they are not immune to 'propaganda fabrication', as Squillace shows in the episode of the Gordian knot, recorded by Arrian, the main collector of Ptolemy's and Aristobulus' fragments (p. 126).

Olga Palagia, Professor of Classical Archaeology, Emerita, at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, is the author of "The Reception of

Alexander in Hellenistic Art". The study deals with the conqueror's portraits in the Hellenistic period. Palagia divides her sources in two groups: "those created within Alexander's and his contemporaries lifetimes (c. 323 – 280 BC), and those created after all living memory of the conqueror had ceased" (c. 280–30 BC) (p. 141). In general, the former ones tend to be more 'realistic', and the latter ones more 'idealized', as Palagia shows over her study. Thus, Palagia concludes: "His (Alexander's) evolving picture passed from realism to rejuvenation and deification without losing its appeal as the embodiment of the youthful conquering hero" (p. 159).

"Metalexandron: Receptions of Alexander in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds" is the contribution by Shane Wallace, Lecturer at Trinity College Dublin, and explores three aspects of Alexander's reception: "invented or false claims to contact with Alexander; local reception in three cities: Ephesus, Ilium, and Rome, and the afterlife of Alexander cults from the third century bc to the third century AD" (p. 163). Crossing the results of these topics, Wallace concludes that the receptions of Alexander tend to be "locally grounded", and "frequently operated within the repertoire of techniques that a ruler had for engaging with a subject city or community" (p. 188).

"Alexander between Rome and Persia: Politics, Ideology, and History", by Jake Nabel, graduated student at Cornell University, is the next chapter. Due the rivalry between Romans and Sassanids, some Iranian sources depict Alexander as 'the Ceasar from Rome" (p. 205). So, the Zoroastrian texts are often hostile to Alexander's image (p. 206). The Romans, for their part, also presented themselves as Alexander's successors, especially when fighting the peoples of Asia, so, concludes Nabel, "the memory of the Macedonian was never static or uncontested, and his kingship would always be variously assessed" (p. 224).

James Mullen, PhD at Newcastle University, writes "Beyond Persianization: The Adoption of Near Eastern Traditions by Alexander the Great". The author proposes that the Alexander's adoption of Persian clothing and obeisance in his court are part of a larger agenda of "continuum of engagements with local traditions". Mullen argues that the representations of Alexander in "pharaonic style in Egypt", and his "entry into Babylon and compliance with Chaldean diviners" (pp. 247-8) are also an important part of this process. "Persianization", therefore, is an inappropriate term for dealing with Alexander's adoption of foreign customs.

“Sons of Heracles: Antony and Alexander in the Late Republic” is written by Kyle Erickson, Head of School of Classics at the University of Wales. For Erickson, it is possible to make an analogy between the Macedonian and the Roman characters since both “looked back to divine familial origins and throughout their lives linked themselves to both Heracles and Dionysus” (p. 271). However, Antony’s *imitatio Alexandri* was not totally successful, since his attempts to conquer the Parthians failed, though Antony was triumphant in his attempts “to reorganize the east into a familiar possession” (p. 271).

The eleventh chapter is “The Ambivalent Model: Alexander in the Greek World between Politics and Literature (1st Century BC/ beg. 1st Century AD)”, by Federicomaria Muccioli, Professor at the University of Bologna. Its aim is to “to investigate the fortune of Alexander from the 1st Century BC till the beginning of the 1st AD in the Greek world under Roman domination” (p. 275). In this scenario, Alexander’s image was ambivalent: sometimes seen as the Greek’s liberator against Roman power, sometimes seen as a model of tyrant, specially for Roman writers like Cicero e Seneca.

The next study, “The Latin Alexander: Constructing Roman Identity”, by Dawn L. Gilley, Associate Professor at Northwest Missouri State University, deals with the same topics. The author emphasizes the use of Alexander, by Romans such as Livy, to discuss themes like imperialism, drunkenness and violence (p. 310).

“Alexander the Great in Seneca’s Works and in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*”, by Giulio Celotto, PhD in at Florida State University, deals again with the topos ‘latin writers versus Alexander’. The conclusion of this chapter goes as it follows: “while Seneca accepts the institution of the Empire and believes that emperors can be good, provided that they exercise virtue, Lucan thinks that monarchy is inherently a wicked form of government, and that all emperors, including Nero, are tyrants” (p. 348).

“Plutarch’s Alexander”, by Sulochana Asirvatham, Associate Professor at Montclair State University, explores Alexander’s biography written by Plutarch, highlighting the conqueror’s idealization in this text. For Asirvatham, the *Vita Alexandri* is better understood when analyzed in its own context, therefore, the chapter’s major conclusion is: “Plutarch’s Alexander is the only world conqueror who has remained “unconquered” – that is, unsurpassed – even into the Trajanic present (p. 373)”.

Part 2 starts with “Alexander in the Jewish tradition: From Second Temple Writings to Hebrew Alexander Romances”, written by Aleksandra

Kłęczar, Associate Professor at the Jagiellonian University. Starting with the Book of Daniel, Sibylline Oracles, and the first book of the Maccabees, Alexander's image in the Jewish tradition gained a great impulse when, in the late Middle Ages, "a number of Hebrew versions of the Alexander Romance emerged" (p. 380.). The chapter's main conclusion is: "(...) by showing Alexander accepting Jewish Scriptures, traditions and customs and by presenting him as compliant to the Jewish way of life, the authors, redactors and composers of the Jewish Alexander texts accept him (...) as his own and, by showing his importance and his glory, exalt the greatness of the Jewish culture, society and religion (p. 397).

"Jews, Samaritans and Alexander: Facts and Fictions in Jewish Stories on the Meeting of Alexander and the High Priest" is written by Meir Ben Shahaar, Professor of Jewish History at the Hebrew University, and highlights the supposed meeting between Alexander and the High Priest, described in some Jewish sources, like Josephus and rabbinic literature. To sum up, Ben Shahaar's main contribution is to show how, in the Jewish tradition, Alexander can assume different receptions.

"The Reception of Alexander the Great in Roman, Byzantine and Early Modern Egypt" have two authors: Agnieszka Wojciechowska (Assistant Professor at the University of Wrocław) and Krzysztof Nawotka (Professor of Ancient History at the University of Wrocław). The chapter's sources are a Coptic version of the Alexander Romance and the portraits of Alexander found in Egypt. These sources, as well as some Arabic writers, deal with a series of legends involving Alexander, especially his desire to be buried in Siwa. Therefore, the supposed location of Alexander's tomb in Egypt is an important topic of this chapter.

"Byzantine Views on Alexander the Great" is written by Corinne Jouanno, Professor at the University of Caen. The author explains that Plutarch's works were the best known texts about Alexander in Byzantium. Since Plutarch's reputation was first and foremost that of a moralist, his ethical views on Alexander were more widely diffused than his biography of the Macedonian king. Jouanno concludes that Alexander's views in Byzantium were positive, however, reservations are found more frequently in learned works, like imperial panegyrics (p. 472).

Jaakkojuhani Peltonen, researcher at the University of Tampere, is the author of "Church Fathers and the Reception of Alexander the Great". The first Christian author to mention Alexander is Tatian, "which connects the critical portrait of Alexander's career to the critique of Aristotle and 'pagan' philosophy" (p. 480). Tatian is followed by Tertullian, which, although comparing Aristoteles and the Christians in *modestia*, criticizes

Alexander for not following the master's teachings (p. 483). Eusebius compares Alexander and Constantine, criticizing the Macedonian (p. 487). Some Christian authors, however, were favorable to Alexander, such as Jeronimo.

"Medieval and Renaissance Italian Receptions of the Alexander Romance Tradition" is written by Barbara Blythe, Visiting Assistant Professor at Wheaton College. The author states that mostly of Alexander's legends in Italy were connected with episodes from the *Alexander Romance*, like the celestial flight and the descent to the bottom of the sea. These images appear in mosaics and textual sources. However, the two greatest Italian writers of the period, Dante and Petrarch, were fierce critics of the macedonian (p. 513).

"Syriac and Persian Versions of the Alexander Romance" is another contribution by Krzysztof Nawotka. The most notable aspect of the Syriac version, according to Nawotka, is that the text bears both references to pagan gods and allusions to Christianity. Darius' last words, were the same ones used by Jesus in Luke (23.46) (p. 526).

Part 3 starts with "Alexander and Napoleon", by Agnieszka Fulińska, PhD in Modern Literatures at Jagiellonian University. The chapter's main contribution is to show how Napoleon tried to present himself as a new Alexander, and how the French emperor, in his letters, used to compare himself with Hannibal, Caesar, Pyrrhus, and Alexander (p. 577).

"The Men Who Would be Alexander: Alexander the Great and His Graeco-Bactrian Successors in the Raj" is by Rachel Mairs, Lecturer at the University of Reading, and explores Alexander's reception in colonial India, starting with Kipling's *The Man Who Would be King* (1888), and reaching nowadays, when some communities in Afghanistan (Kalash) have received investment from Greek NGOs to present themselves as Alexander's descendes, due, according to Mairs, "economic imperatives" (p. 592).

"Receptions of Alexander in Johann Gustav Droysen", by Josef Wiesehöfer, Professor at the University of Kiel, is an enlightening introduction to the life and works of Droysen, famous for created the concept of Hellenism. However, the major aim of this chapter is to show how Droysen drew his theses inspired by other authors, like John Gillies, and even Montesquieu and other french illuminists (pp. 605-6).

"The Unmanly Ruler: Bagoas, Alexander's Eunuch Lover, Mary Renault's *The Persian Boy*, and Alexander Reception" is written by Elizabeth

Baynham, Senior Lecturer at the The University of Newcastle, and Terry Ryan, Baynham's colleague. The authors analyze all kinds of sources about Bagoas, the Persian eunuch who inspired Mary Renault in his historical novel *The Persian Boy* (1972). Beyond this question, the study is proficient in demonstrating Renault's methods (p. 624).

"Alexander's Image in German, Anglo-American and French Scholarship from the Aftermath of World War I to the Cold War" is written by Reinhold Bichler, Professor at the University of Innsbruck. Dealing with a wide range of scenarios, Bichler highlights some approaches to Alexandre made by nazi-historians. Berve, for example, praised Alexander because of his concern with 'purity of races' (p. 645). Schachermeyr, on the other hand, blamed the conqueror because of his "degeneration of the Nordic element" in Greek ethnicity (p. 646). In the UK, Alexander's most famous interpretation was W. W. Tarn's "brotherhood of man", concept created in clear connection with the British empire. Finally, in France, the idea of hellenization was widespread, as shown by Jouguet's works (p. 666).

"Alexander as Glorious Failure: The Case of Robert Rossen's *Alexander the Great* (1956)", by Alastair Blanshard, Senior Lecturer at the University of Sydney, tries to explain the flop of Rossen's movie. Blanshard's most ambitious hypothesis is that the absence of a Shakespeare text on Alexander, which could explain the context of the film to viewers, justifies this failure (p. 691).

Margaret Butler, Fellow of Ralston College, writes "Go East, Young Man: Adventuring in the Spirit of Alexander". The chapter deals with tourists and academics who try to follow the routes of Alexander's expedition in Asia. The study gives attention to the documentary "In the Footsteps of Alexander" (BBC), presented by Michel Wood, historian and documentary filmmaker, who followed Alexander's trail guided by Arrian's and Curtius' writings (p. 707).

"The Great Misstep: Alexander the Great, Thais, and the Destruction of Persepolis", by Alex McAuley, Lecturer at the Cardiff University, analyzes the role of Athenian courtesan Thais in the infamous episode of Persepolis' burning. The study reviews the long duration of Thais' image in the West, seen firstly as a villain of Alexander's career, to the present day, when his image is used by Russian dating sites (pp. 732-33).

"Avoiding Nation Building in Afghanistan: An Absent Insight from Alexander", written by Jason Warren, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Army War College, is the volume's weakest chapter. The low use of specialized bibliography - only six works are cited - helps explain some questionable

interpretations, for example: “in the late 1970s, the Soviet empire, heir to the Romanovs, perhaps sought a distraction from autocratic rule at home” (p. 745).

“The Artist as Art Historian: Some Modern Works on Alexander”, by Ada Cohen, Professor of Art History at Dartmouth College, is an interesting essay on Alexander's reception by modern artists, especially when the political issues between Greece and North Macedonia are analyzed. The works of John Steell, George Zlatanidis, Nikolaus Dogoulis and Evangelos Moustakas are studied.

“Alexander the Great Screaming Out for Hellenicity: Greek Songs and Political Dissent”, is a work by Guendalina Taietti, PhD in University of Liverpool. The lyrical content analyzed by Taietti is quite varied, from: “the polarity between the culturally superior Greeks and the uneducated, violent barbarians, and Alexander’s invincibility on the battlefield and fondness for knowledge (p. 769) to the “contrast between the wretched life of the Modern Greek man and the mightiness of Alexander” (p. 797).

“The Conscience of the King: Alexander the Great and the Ancient Disabled” closes the volume, and is written by Alexandra Morris, undergraduated in Museum Studies at New York University. She studies the controversies surrounding Alexander's succession, especially involving his half brother Arrhidaeus. The chapter sheds light on Arrhidaeus’ possible mental illness, and how this aspect interferes in the reception of Alexander's brother in the Western world (p. 841).

Given the volume’s extent, it is impossible to analyze each chapter in detail. However, despite its length, the volume misses chapters addressing themes such as Modi and Stone’s movies on Alexander, as well as Alexander’s image in the Quran. Overall, though these lapses, the companion’s level is excellent, and, to my view, the best chapters are the ones by Palagia, Klęczar, and Bichler. In full reading, or consulting a particular study, the reader can make good use of the work.

Bibliographic references

MOORE, Kenneth Ryce (ed.). *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Alexander the Great*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018.