

*Alexander the Great: A New History*. Edited by WALDEMAR HECKEL and LAWRENCE TRITLE. Chichester and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. Pp. xix + 366. Paper, \$44.95. ISBN 978-1-4051-3082-0.

*Alexander the Great: A New History* is the third editorial collaboration to date from Waldemar Heckel (H.) and Lawrence Tritle (T.). [[1]] Like their earlier projects, which are (essentially) collections of conference papers, this volume contains sixteen essays from international scholars on a variety of topics related to Alexander, his time period and his legacy. The publishers promise that these essays offer an “innovative treatment” with “new approaches to Alexander’s reign.” Given the dozens of Alexander-themed books published just in the past six years, among them both of H. and T.’s earlier edited collections, a “new” history of Alexander, while it would be welcome, seems unlikely. But as H. puts it in the Introduction, “newness and appeal” are “found in [the collection’s] diversity ... novel insights ... [and] breadth of coverage” (p. 1).

The “diversity” and “breadth of coverage” lie mainly in the range of topics: from military campaigns to Court life, from Darius’ Persia to Alexander’s mother, from sex to divinity, from Rome to Hollywood. Diverse also are the perspectives on Alexander and his impact that this broad representation of international scholarship offers (albeit international representation is not innovative). In addition to their own contributions, H. and T. have commissioned thirteen essays from twelve international scholars; thus, commendably, fourteen institutions in nine countries are represented. All contributions appear in English.

Although each essay can stand on its own, the volume is thoughtfully organized to give the reader first some crucial background to Alexander’s reign, followed by a chronological overview of major events during his campaigns and the wars of the Successors, and then a survey of key “problems” and other interesting thematic studies. Finally, several essays discussing Alexander’s *Nachleben*—ancient, medieval and modern—bring the reader up to present day.

The opening essay, Michael Zahrnt’s “The Macedonian Background” (Ch. 1, pp. 7–25), offers a general summary of Macedonian history to the death of Philip II and accession of Alexander III. Zahrnt’s argument that “Philip did not create Macedonia from nothing” (p. 7), and his claim that Philip was “an even greater man” than Alexander (p. 25), are not novel, as both have been made in recent scholarship (he does not cite beyond 1999). The historical narrative continues virtually *meta de tauta* with H.’s first contribution, “Alexander’s Conquest

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of Asia" (Ch. 2, pp. 26–52). H. confesses "without a twinge of guilt" that this is "a very slight reworking" of a contribution to K. Kinzl (2006). [[1]] Nevertheless, as a succinct account of Alexander's campaign it is engaging and meticulous. H.'s focus on policy and propaganda underscores for the neophyte the complexity of Alexander, while the already well-informed reader will find a challenge to long-standing interpretations in H.'s views, for instance, on the experiment with *proskynesis* (p. 46) and Alexander's behavior at the Hyphasis (p. 49).

In "The Diadochi, or Successors to Alexander" (Ch. 3, pp. 53–68), P. Wheatley gives a cogent introduction to "several dire problems" (p. 68) that face scholars of this poorly documented period (cf. his contribution to Heckel et al. (2007)). [[2]] Wheatley is unusual in bringing to the standard discussion of Classical sources the "cryptic" and controversial Babylonian Chronicle of the Diadochi (p. 55). His focus is on the Successors' conceptions of *basileia* and "the overarching tension between centralist and separatist ambitions" (p. 55), which he argues does not end with Antigonos' defeat at Ipsus. With the historical context thus established down to the end of the first generation (c. 281), the reader proceeds to thematic studies.

H.'s second essay, "A King and His Army" (Ch. 4, pp. 69–82), mirrors his recent contribution to Roisman (2003) and echoes his important earlier publications on Alexander's marshals. [[3]] G. Weber in "The Court of Alexander the Great as Social System" (Ch. 5, pp. 83–98) synthesizes recent scholarship with his arguments for the transformation of Alexander's court after he abandoned "the mobile camp structure"—namely, the "new possibilities" gained from the infrastructure of the Persian royal palaces (p. 90). But Weber underestimates the non-Macedonian participation in Alexander's court prior to the return from the East. This is more than amply demonstrated by T.'s contribution, "Artists and Soldiers, Friends and Enemies" (Ch. 7, pp. 121–40; especially 130–6), one of two essays that rehash the old topic "Alexander and the Greeks." While T. negotiates the gray area of the designations pro- and anti-Macedonian, E. Poddighé's "The Corinthian League" (Ch. 6, pp. 99–120) revisits the vexed questions of the League's charter and membership.

P. Briant contributes two essays on the Persian context of Alexander's reign, "The Empire of Darius III in Perspective" (Ch. 8, pp. 141–70) and "Alexander and the Persian Empire, between 'Decline' and 'Renovation': History and Historiography" (Ch. 9, pp. 171–88). Briant synthesizes (mostly his own) earlier scholarship, and—though he

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digresses from the book's theme, for example with the archaeological evidence for "particularly Bactrian" hydraulic structures in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium (p. 150)—he argues essentially for the continuity of satrapal administration under the Achaemenids *and* Macedonians. He concludes: "one must 'break' the predetermined, even overdetermined, periodization centered on the year 334" (p. 188).

The strength of this book rests on its stimulating discussions from "authoritative" voices, such as E. Carney's commanding interpretation of Olympias' influence on her son and the consequences of polygamy in "Alexander and his 'Terrible Mother'" (Ch. 10, pp. 189–202). D. Ogden, overturning Tarn's (1948) "ahead of its time" (p. 204) look at Alexander and sex, gives a solid discussion of the evidence for four significant female relationships and three sexual male relationships in "Alexander's Sex Life" (Ch. 11, pp. 203–17). His comparison of Alexander with Philip (p. 108) reveals that the son was more like his father with respect to marriages and offspring than is usually acknowledged. B. Dreyer for his "Heroes, Cults, and Divinity" (Ch. 12, pp. 218–34) relies heavily on earlier studies; but in his grappling with the "core question" of the contemporaneity of Alexander's deification, particularly at Athens, he overlooks the important discussions of Cawkwell and (recently) Worthington. [[4]]

The final four essays deal with the *Nachleben* of Alexander in literature, art and cinema. A. Meeus in "Alexander's Image in the Age of the Successors" (Ch. 13, pp. 235–50) makes a strong case for Alexander's popularity among the successors and the "high symbolic value" of his body and relics (p. 238). The "allusive and pervasive impact of Alexander on the popular imagination" (p. 251), from Scipio Africanus to Hadrian, is the focus of D. Spencer's "Roman Alexanders: Epistemology and Identity" (Ch. 14, pp. 251–74). Her suggestion, again a synthesis of earlier work, is that "we read Rome's Alexander as an inevitable precursor to and even by-product of Roman imperialism in the late republic" (p. 252). The discussion of Alexander's portraiture offered by C. Mihalopoulos in "The Construction of a New Ideal: The Official Portraiture of Alexander the Great" (Ch. 15, pp. 275–93), although greatly indebted to Stewart, [[5]] leaves something to be desired. For example, where Mihalopoulos appears to challenge Stewart, as in the dating of the Pella Alexander (given in the text p. 281 as c. 200–150, noted in n. 25 *contra* Stewart's dating of c. 300–270), she gives no explanation for her down-dating. Among other troublesome spots, the captions for Figures 5.2 and 15.4 are reversed. Lastly, E.J. Baynham in "Power, Passion, and Patrons: Alexander, Charles Le Brun, and Oliver Stone"

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(Ch. 16, pp. 294–310) gives a splendid discussion of perceptions of Alexander in Western culture and how the historical material has been adapted to suit, specifically, Le Brun and Stone's own interpretations (p. 299). She looks at passion "both as a physical expression of emotion and in a more broadly romantic sense" (p. 300), and at "the extent to which an artistic vision is driven by the desires of the paymaster" (p. 300). Inconsistency in referencing Le Brun's paintings unfortunately makes for some confusion.

The book also contains a chronological chart; 20 figures mostly of oft-seen art depicting Alexander, including two color plates of the paintings of Charles Le Brun; and a map of Alexander's campaign routes.

This book is, on the one hand, "[a] highly informed and enjoyable resource for students and interested general readers." [Amazon.com] Yet the more serious Alexander scholar will also be rewarded by rich discussions of a broad range of topics. As a "new" history of Alexander, however, the book is ephemeral. H. and T. do not really step outside "the five traditional areas of Alexander scholarship: sources, historical background, Alexander's policies towards the Greeks and the East, his personal relationships, and his *Nachleben*," [[6]] Moreover, there is irony in the editors' criticism of Roisman (2003) for not summarizing the nature of the evidence, when in the present book readers are simply referred for this to "Bosworth and Baynham 2000 and Bosworth 2002" (p. 3 n. 5). What H. and T.'s collection of essays does offer is a synthesis of recent scholarship and current trends that will reward both the general and the specialized reader as well as stimulate further discussion.

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[[1]] Previously: W. Heckel and L.A. Tritle, eds., *Crossroads of History: The Age of Alexander* (Claremont, 2003); W. Heckel, L.A. Tritle and P. V. Wheatley, eds., *Alexander's Empire: From Formulation to Decay* (Claremont, 2007).

[[2]] W. Heckel, "The Conquests of Alexander the Great," in K. Kinzl, ed., *A Companion to the Classical Greek World* (Oxford, 2006) 560–88.

[[3]] See W. Heckel, "King and "Companions": Observations on the Nature of Power in the Reign of Alexander," in J. Roisman, ed., *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great* (Leiden and Boston, 2003).

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197–225; also W. Heckel, *The Marshalls of Alexander's Empire* (London and New York, 1992).

[[4]] G. Cawkwell, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," in I. Worthington, ed., *Ventures Into Greek History* (Oxford, 1994) 293–306; I. Worthington, "Hyperides 5.32 and Alexander the Great's Statue," *Hermes* 129.1 (2001) 129–31.

[[5]] A. Stewart, *Faces of Power: Alexander's image and Hellenistic Politics* (California, 1993).

[[6]] A. Tronson, *Review of J. Roisman, ed., Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great* (Leiden and Boston, 2003) in *CR* 2004.54.2: 470.