

# Alexander's Return to Greece in the *Alexander Romance*

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THE *ALEXANDER ROMANCE*, a largely fictional account of Alexander the Great, is full of odd and arresting discrepancies with the more trustworthy historical accounts of the conqueror's career. The route of the campaign described in the *Romance* is not the least of these inconsistencies, taking Alexander, as it does, along roads he never traveled and to places he never saw. Perhaps the oddest and most remarkable deviation from the historical record in the *Romance's* version of Alexander's itinerary is not a visit to some unlikely, exotic, or fabulous locale, but his return to Greece in the midst of his eastern campaign. Whereas, in fact, Alexander crossed the Hellespont never to see Macedonia or Greece again, in the *Romance* he comes back to put down an uprising of the Greeks and lay waste Thebes before he finally defeats Darius and completes the conquest of the Persian Empire. As Stoneman notes, the narrative here is “[l]ike a film running in reverse,”<sup>1</sup> and the effect can be just as comical and disconcerting.

Even the *Romance's* idiosyncratic deviation has its own discrepancies, since the *Romance* survives in several identifiable versions, or recensions, each marked by its distinctive additions, omissions, and elaborations. The differences occur already in the two earliest versions: the  $\alpha$  recension, represented by a single Greek manuscript, *Parisinus graecus* 1711 (A), Julius Valerius' Latin translation (ca. 270–330), and the Armenian translation (ca. 500), and the later  $\beta$  recension, written after

<sup>1</sup> Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (London 1991) 191 n.44.

500 and represented by several Greek manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> In the  $\alpha$  recension Alexander returns to Greece and suppresses a revolt of the Greeks for the first and only time, while in the  $\beta$  recension he has already quashed a Greek revolt in the period between his accession and his preliminary crossing into Asia before he returns to Greece and again suppresses a revolt.<sup>3</sup> The  $\beta$  recension may demonstrate a greater concern for historical accuracy by setting Alexander's suppression of Greek resistance before the beginning of his campaign against Persia, as Jouanno has suggested,<sup>4</sup> but is not so careful in this regard that it excised the later return to Greece, resulting in a reduplication perhaps more baffling than the simple misplacement of this episode. Upon consideration, though, Alexander's return to Greece is more than just an embarrassing mistake; it is a telling indication of the kind of work that the *Alexander Romance* is. It might also tell us something about how the *Romance* relates to other accounts of Alexander, Plutarch's *De fortuna Alexandri* in particular.

<sup>2</sup> The best outline of the various recensions, versions, and translations of the *Alexander Romance*, with bibliography, is found in Richard Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (New Haven 2007) 230–254; but see also Stoneman, *Greek Alexander Romance* 28–32. Corinne Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses du Roman d'Alexandre: Domaine grec* (Paris 2002) 13–55, 247–303, provides a detailed study of the Greek versions of the  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  recensions. The text of A has been edited by Wilhelm Kroll, *Historia Alexandri Magni (Pseudo-Callisthenes). Recensio Vetusta* (Berlin 1926); Julius Valerius' Latin translation by Michaela Rosellini, *Iuli Valerii res gestae Alexandri Macedonis translatae ex Aesopo Graeco* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1993); and the  $\beta$  recension by Leif Bergson, *Der griechische Alexanderroman, Rezension  $\beta$*  (Stockholm 1965). Albert M. Wolohojian, *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes* (New York 1969), provides an English rendering of the Armenian translation. All the important Greek and Latin texts of the first two books of the *Romance*, as well as a thorough commentary, are to be found in Richard Stoneman, *Il Romanzo di Alessandro I* (Milan 2007), and Richard Stoneman and Tristano Gargiulo, *Il Romanzo di Alessandro II* (Milan 2012); the third volume is eagerly anticipated.

<sup>3</sup> *Al.Rom.* ( $\alpha$ ) 1.45.1–2.6.7; ( $\beta$ ) 1.26.3–28.2, 1.42.9/11–2.6.7.

<sup>4</sup> Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses* 261–263.

Although his headlong campaign took him far and wide, the idea of Alexander retracing his steps was by no means inconceivable. Indeed, when he returned from Egypt to Syria, constrained by the sea on one side and the desert on the other, he was compelled to go the same way he had advanced toward Egypt, along the Levantine coast, presumably by the same road.<sup>5</sup> None of our Alexander historians remark upon what he did along the way, but this instance of Alexander going back the way he came might have inspired the fanciful to imagine that he did it on other occasions as well. We should remember, moreover, that in the *Romance* Alexander is not retracing his steps as he proceeds from Cilicia, across Asia Minor, back to Greece. According to the *Romance*, he had never come that way before, but rather came to meet Darius at Issus from Egypt.<sup>6</sup> Even in the  $\beta$  recension, he had not ventured beyond Pamphylia in his initial foray into Persian territory.<sup>7</sup> The march to Greece from Cilicia is the *Romance's* opportunity to cover Alexander's progress through Asia Minor, albeit in reverse.

Even the repetition of the march on Greece and suppression of the Greek revolt in the  $\beta$  recension might seem to have some warrant in the historical record. There were, in a sense, two Greek revolts and Alexander had to take action against them twice. At the news of Philip's murder in 336 a number of Greek states moved to assert their independence and refused to recognize the new king as their overlord; Alexander marched south and intimidated them into a renewed subjection.<sup>8</sup> The next year a rumour of Alexander's death while on campaign against the Triballians sparked a new revolt, which Alexander suppressed by quick action and the monitory devastation of Thebes.<sup>9</sup> While Thebes was laid waste only once, not twice as

<sup>5</sup> Diod. 17.52.7; Plut. *Alex.* 29.1; Arr. *Anab.* 3.6.1; Curt. 4.8.10, 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Al.Rom.* 1.34.9, 1.41.1–2.

<sup>7</sup> *Al.Rom.* ( $\beta$ ) 1.26.3–29.1.

<sup>8</sup> Diod. 17.3.1–17.4.9; Arr. *Anab.* 1.1.1–3.

<sup>9</sup> Diod. 17.8.3–17.15.5; Plut. *Alex.* 11.3–14.1; Arr. *Anab.* 1.7–10; Just. *Epit.*

the  $\beta$  recension would have it, the city had, previous to its destruction, already been overawed into a panicked capitulation by Alexander's swift arrival under its walls.<sup>10</sup> If the two Greek uprisings and Alexander's reaction to them were seen as parallel events of equal importance, the  $\beta$  recension's reduplication of Greek revolts and Alexander's reaction to them might not have seemed altogether strange.

Alexander in the *Romance* could be said to have been travelling in reverse since his departure from Egypt, for he moves up the Levantine coast, takes Tyre, and then meets Darius in battle at Issus, whereas historically Alexander won his victory at Issus first, then besieged Tyre, before finally arriving in Egypt.<sup>11</sup> In this way Alexander's return to Greece can be seen as a continuation of his march in reverse from Egypt after his fictitious detour through the western Mediterranean, a continuation all the way back to his actual point of departure for Asia. But Cilicia can also be seen as pivotal in the *Romance's* return of Alexander to Greece. It is after his victory in Cilicia that he heads back to Greece, though the name of Cilicia appears in the  $\beta$  recension (1.41.1), but not the  $\alpha$  recension. And it is from Cilicia that Alexander resumes his advance into Persian territory after his victories in Greece.

There is some confusion in the  $\beta$  recension over Alexander's route in the immediate vicinity of Cilicia. Although he is supposedly coming from Egypt, Alexander approaches Issus by crossing the Taurus range and by way of Tarsus, and when he leaves, though he crosses the Taurus again, his first stop is Hipperia, Pieris in the Armenian version and presumably to be

<sup>10</sup> 11.2.4–11.4.12.

<sup>10</sup> Diod. 17.3.4, 17.4.4.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Pierre Callu and Michel Festy, "Alternatives historiennes: de l'*Historia Alexandri* à l'*Historia Augusta*," in Lavinia Galli Milić and Nicole Hecquet-Noti (eds.), *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Genevese in honorem F. Paschoud septuagenarii* (Bari 2010) 123, suggest that it is the chronology of events from 336–331, and not Alexander's route, which is reversed in the *Romance*.

identified with the region of Pieria to the south of Issus.<sup>12</sup> There may be confusion over the direction Alexander should be moving, but these are not stray items included in his itinerary at random; they have been consciously integrated into the overall narrative, since an omen interpretation at ‘Hipperia’ predicted that Alexander would struggle to subdue not only the barbarian tribes but also the cities of the Greeks, as if this was yet to be accomplished.<sup>13</sup> It would appear that the  $\beta$  redactor was trying to retain some historical details in the account, without taking into consideration the directions implied by these details or the overall movement of the narrative;<sup>14</sup> the confusion that arises is not surprising. The  $\alpha$  recension avoids all this confusion, though admittedly by being rather more vague when it comes to geography.

The simplicity of the  $\alpha$  recension, moreover, would seem to have been achieved by a process of excision. The confusing geographical detail around Cilicia in the  $\beta$  recension after the battle of Issus is also found in Julius Valerius and in the Armenian translation, which, along with our one Greek manuscript of the  $\alpha$  recension, depend on a common source, also the source for the later  $\beta$  recension.<sup>15</sup> When we find material thus in the  $\beta$  recension and the other witnesses to the  $\alpha$  recension, Julius Valerius and the Armenian version, but not in the Greek witness to the  $\alpha$  recension, we may assume that it was in the source of our Greek version, but has been removed. This certainly seems to be the case in regard to Alexander’s movements around Cilicia. In the A manuscript Alexander moves smoothly from Issus to Greece because all the details of his movement have been cut out. The situation in the  $\alpha$  recension’s source, however, must have been almost as convoluted as we have it in the  $\beta$  recension.

<sup>12</sup> *Al.Rom.* ( $\beta$ ) 1.41.1, 42.4, 6; vers. Arm. 121, Wolohojian 66.

<sup>13</sup> *Al.Rom.* ( $\beta$ ) 1.42.7; cf. Jul. Val. 1.42; vers. Arm. 121, Wolohojian 66.

<sup>14</sup> See Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses* 263.

<sup>15</sup> Jul. Val. 1.42; vers. Arm. 121, Wolohojian 66.

Ausfeld sought to use this confusion to explain the re-direction of Alexander's march after Issus in the *Romance*. He proposed, citing a phrase in Arrian on the crossing of the Hellespont (1.11.6: σφάζαντα ταῦρον τῷ Ποσειδῶνι, "sacrificing a bull to Poseidon"), that the author of the ur-*Romance* behind our versions encountered a similar clause in one of his sources, perhaps such as εἰς Ἀσίαν περάσαι ταῦρον σφάττοντα ("sacrificing a bull to cross into Asia"), and mistook the sacrificial victim for a place name and the Taurus Mountains as the place from which Alexander entered Asia.<sup>16</sup> So an event in the course of Alexander's progress further into the Persian Empire would become a step back towards Greece. I am not satisfied with Ausfeld's explanation, which requires us to imagine the precise wording of a lost source that may never actually have existed, but I do think one of the few efforts to make sense of the *Romance's* march in reverse order should be given its due.

The α and β recensions agree that, after his activities back in Greece, Alexander resumed his march into enemy territory and against Darius from Cilicia.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, there is no account of how he returned there: rather, after he had dealt with the last of his opponents in Greece he is simply said to have "made haste from there to the lands of the barbarians through Cilicia" (κάκειθεν ὄρμησεν εἰς τὰ μέρη τὰ τῶν βαρβάρων διὰ τῆς Κιλικίας).<sup>18</sup> Cilicia once again appears to be the point from which Alexander's detour back to Greece begins and ends, and so an important pivot point on his route.

Cilicia seems to have the same significance in a passage at the opening of Plutarch's *De fortuna Alexandri*, in which Alex-

<sup>16</sup> Adolf Ausfeld, *Der griechische Alexanderroman* (Leipzig 1907) 147–148; cf. Stoneman, *Romanzo di Alessandro* I 561. Ausfeld also notes the transposition of Alexander's spear cast to lay claim to Asia from the Hellespont (Diod. 17.17.2; Just. *Epit.* 11.5.10) to the Taurus Mountains in the *Romance* ([β] 1.42.4–5; Jul. Val. 1.42; vers. Arm. 120, Wolohojian 66).

<sup>17</sup> *Al. Rom.* 2.6.7.

<sup>18</sup> *Al. Rom.* (α) 2.6.7; 72 Kroll.

ander is made to say:<sup>19</sup>

ἐγὼ δ' εἰς Σοῦσα νικῶν δι' Ἀρβήλων ἀναβέβηκα, καὶ Κιλικία μοι πλατεῖαν ἀνέφωξεν Αἴγυπτον, Κιλικίαν δὲ Γράνικος, ὃν Μιθριδάτη καὶ Σπιθριδάτη νεκροῖς ἐπιβὰς διεπέρασα.

Prevailing through Arbela I went up to Susa, and Cilicia laid open to me the broad land of Egypt, but the Granicus, which I crossed stepping on the corpses of Mithridates and Spithridates, [gave me] Cilicia.

Cilicia here signifies the battle at Issus, along with Alexander's other major victories at the Granicus and Arbela (Gaugamela).<sup>20</sup> Alexander's campaign also seems to hinge on Cilicia: it is the goal and destination which victory at the Granicus allows him to achieve, and it, in turn, opens the way to further progress and the conquest of Egypt. Cilicia similarly serves as a joint in the *Romance*, permitting Alexander's march to swing from one stage to the next. It is worth noting that Plutarch also lists Alexander's battles in reverse order here: Arbela, Cilicia, then Granicus; this is a rhetorical device, but it might give rise to some confusion. I suspect that Plutarch's passage, or one very much like it, might have contributed to the thinking behind Alexander's route in the *Romance*, especially the notion that made Cilicia, not once, but twice, the point from which he turned to his next undertaking.

Another passage from this same treatise of Plutarch can shed even more light on the *Romance's* construction of Alexander's route and his return to Greece in particular. Ausfeld considered the whole episode of Alexander's return to Greece to be an interpolation by an extraneous hand.<sup>21</sup> Certainly he had grounds, especially if we concentrate on the  $\alpha$  recension, in

<sup>19</sup> Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 1.2 (326F); ed. Annamaria D'Angelo, *Plutarco, La fortuna o la virtù di Alessandro Magno, Prima Orazione* (Naples 1998) 96–99, see also 145–149.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 2.7 (339A).

<sup>21</sup> Ausfeld, *Der griechische Alexanderroman* 146–147; cf. Stoneman, *Romanzo di Alessandro* I 560.

which Alexander goes directly from the Persian camp, captured after Issus, to suddenly being amongst the Locrians.<sup>22</sup> But even in Julius Valerius, the Armenian translation, and the  $\beta$  recension Alexander is intent on coming to grips with the larger force that Darius assembled in the aftermath of his defeat, right up to the point when he inexplicably departs for Greece.<sup>23</sup> Alexander's return to Greece may be an interpolation, but we must still ask why it was inserted where we find it and why it was deemed an acceptable interpolation, retained in all versions of the *Romance*. A passage in the *De fortuna Alexandri*, I suggest, offers something of an answer. Plutarch is describing the constraints and obstacles which Tyche, the figure of Fortune or Luck, imposed on Alexander before he was ever able to embark on his Asian campaign:<sup>24</sup>

ἐπεὶ δὲ Φιλίππου τελευτήσαντος ὄρητο διαβαλεῖν καὶ ταῖς ἐλπίσιν ἤδη καὶ ταῖς παρασκευαῖς ἐμπεφυκῶς ἔσπευδεν ἄψασθαι τῆς Ἀσίας, ἐνίστατο δὲ ἡ Τύχη καὶ ἀπέστρεφε καὶ ἀνθεῖλκεν ὀπίσω καὶ μυρίας περιέβαλλεν ἀσχολίας καὶ διατριβὰς ἐπιλαμβανομένη· πρῶτον αὐτῷ τὰ βαρβαρικά τῶν προσοίκων διετάραξεν, Ἰλλυρικοὺς καὶ Τριβαλλικοὺς μηχανωμένη πολέμους· οἷς μέχρι Σκυθίας τῆς παρ' Ἰστρον ἀποσπασθεὶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἄνω πράξεων καὶ περιδραμῶν καὶ κατεργασάμενος πάντα κινδύνους καὶ ἀγῶσι μεγάλοις, αὐτῆς ὄρητο καὶ ἔσπευδε πρὸς τὴν διάβασιν· ἡ δὲ πάλιν αὐτῷ τὰς Θήβας ἐνέσεισε καὶ πόλεμον Ἑλληνικὸν ἐμποδῶν κατέβαλε, καὶ δεινὴν πρὸς ἄνδρας ὁμοφύλους καὶ συγγενεῖς διὰ φόνων καὶ σιδήρου καὶ πυρὸς ἀνάγκην ἀμύνης, ἀτερπέστατον τέλος ἔχουσαν.

But, once Philip was dead, when he hastened to cross over and strove, holding fast to his hopes and plans, to lay hold of Asia, Tyche resisted him and turned him back and pulled him backwards and set myriads of distractions and delays about him,

<sup>22</sup> *Al. Rom.* ( $\alpha$ ) 1.41.11, 1.45.1.

<sup>23</sup> *Al. Rom.* ( $\beta$ ) 1.42.1–4; *Jul. Val.* 1.42; *vers. Arm.* 118–120, Wolohojian 65–66.

<sup>24</sup> *Plut. De Alex. fort.* 2.11 (342C–D); ed. Maria Rubina Cammarota, *Plutarco, La fortuna o la virtù di Alessandro Magno, Seconda Orazione* (Naples 1998) 154–157, see also 271–273.

holding him fast. First she stirred up against him the barbarian elements of those who lived nearby, engineering Illyrian and Triballian wars. By these he was dragged away as far as Scythia on the Danube from higher deeds and having spun round and overcome all these things by dangers and great struggles, again he hastened and strove toward the crossing. But again she hurled Thebes at him and threw down the impediment of a Greek war and the dire necessity of defending himself against kinsmen and relatives by bloodshed and iron and fire, which had a most joyless conclusion.

Now, Plutarch's overblown rhetoric does not itself deviate from the historical record, but, especially in the absence of a more prosaic account for comparison, it might be misread in such a way as to justify the route described in the *Romance*. That might occur, if the reader failed to note that Plutarch was describing the situation before Alexander began his campaign against Persia or to assume that his mention of a crossing (διαβαλεῖν, διάβασις) meant crossing the straits over to Asia, but rather took it for a crossing into the heart of Asia, or even crossing into Persian territory as it was constituted in the time of the Roman Empire, that is, passing a boundary well to the east of Cilicia. While it is true that διαβάλλω and διάβασις usually refer to crossing water, either a river or the sea, Plutarch does not specify what is to be crossed. As early as Homer the preposition διά was used for crossing the boundary of a gate through a wall and in the sixth-century chronicle of John Malalas, roughly contemporary with the β recension of the *Romance*, Perseus is said to march against Assyria from Tarsus by crossing over (διά) Mt. Argaeus, and both these usages might suggest a broader sense to these words.<sup>25</sup> A number of phrases might then be seen in a very different light. If “as he sped to Asia” (ἔσπευδεν ἄψασθαι τῆς Ἀσίας) is taken to mean as he strove to complete, rather than begin, his conquest of

<sup>25</sup> *Il.* 3.263, 7.340; Malalas *Chron.* 2.11 (ed. Thurn 27), καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ὥρμησεν ἐκεῖθεν διὰ τοῦ Ἀργαίου ὄρους κατὰ Ἀσσυρίων.

Asia,<sup>26</sup> then when Tyche turned him around (ἀπέστρεφε) and dragged him back (ἀνθεῖλκεν ὀπίσω) one could well imagine Alexander being carried back to Greece from the midst of his campaign. And again when he is drawn back (ἀποσπασθείς) from his intended conquests as far as the Danube, one might envision a return to Greece, rather than a prevention of his initial crossing. Even the adverb πάλιν which begins the phrase “again Tyche stirred up Thebes” might give rise to some misunderstanding. Plutarch no doubt intended πάλιν to be read in the sense of “moreover, what’s more,” but the word might also be taken to mean “again, once more” and so justify the two sieges of Thebes in the β recension. Plutarch’s description of Tyche’s dealings with Alexander could, then, be misconstrued—by accident, I should think—to indicate that Alexander had to return to Greece, even from the middle of his eastern campaign.

Identifying a possible contributory or corroborating source, however, is not the same as suggesting why the episode of Alexander’s return to Greece should be included in the *Romance* in the first place. There might be some clue, however, in the list of foes Alexander had to face on his return to Greece. For the most part, these are the same enemies that, in fact, Alexander put down before he left to invade the Persian Empire, chiefly the Thebans and Athenians. But Alexander also does battle against the Lacedaemonians, at least in the α recension (2.6.1–7). Now, Sparta took no part in the resistance to Alexander at the outset of his reign, although Arrian (1.7.4) suggests that Alexander feared the Theban rising would encourage the Spartans, “long since rebels in intention” (πάλαι ἤδη ταῖς γνώμαις

<sup>26</sup> Our sources suggest that the conquest of Asia was considered an accomplished fact only after the battle of Gaugamela and before that an anticipated goal; Diod. 17.17.2, 17.36.5; Plut. *Alex.* 34.1; Arr. *Anab.* 2.3.7, 3.9.6, 4.15.6, 4.20.3, 7.15.4, *Ind.* 35.8; Curt. 3.1.16; Just. *Epit.* 11.5.5, 11.7.4. The only instance of Alexander claiming the kingship of Asia before Gaugamela is in a taunting letter he is supposed to have written to Darius after Issus: Arr. *Anab.* 2.14.8–9.

ἀφεσθηκότες), to move against him as well. The Spartans did, however, enter into open hostilities against Alexander once he was inextricably embroiled in his eastern adventure. In 331 the Spartan king, Agis III, launched a campaign against Macedonian dominance and posed a real threat to Alexander's position in Greece until he was defeated at the battle of Megalopolis and killed in combat.<sup>27</sup> Engaged in moving his expeditionary force from Egypt to the final confrontation with Darius' army at Gaugamela, Alexander was unable to detach himself from the eastern campaign and could only dispatch Amphoterus to offer some aid to those Peloponnesians who remained loyal, and so it was left to Antipater, his viceroy in Macedon, to hastily assemble an army and handle this situation.

The author of the *Romance* was obviously determined to accommodate this Spartan resistance to Alexander in his account somehow. He achieved this, in part, by an odd compromise. On the one hand, he consolidated the Spartan war with all the other instances of Greek resistance to Macedonian control, even though it was a separate incident that occurred at a different time. Grouping thematically linked events together is not a particularly objectionable attempt at tidying up a narrative, and hardly surprising in a work with more literary or rhetorical than properly historiographic tendencies. On the other hand, this consolidated Greek resistance is assigned to the time of the Spartan rising, that is, after Issus and before Gaugamela, in the very midst of Alexander's expedition to Asia, instead of before the commencement of the expedition when

<sup>27</sup> Diod. 17.48.1–2, 17.62.1–63.4, 17.73.5–6; Curt. 6.1.1–21; Arr. *Anab.* 3.6.3; Just. *Epit.* 12.1.4–11. See Ernst Badian, "Agis III," *Hermes* 95 (1967) 170–192; Eugene Borza, "The End of Agis' Revolt," *CP* 66 (1971) 230–235; A. B. Bosworth, "The Mission of Amphoterus and the Outbreak of Agis' War," *Phoenix* 29 (1975) 27–43; E. I. McQueen, "Some Notes on the Anti-Macedonian Movement in the Peloponnese in 331 B.C.," *Historia* 27 (1978) 40–64; Stephen Ruzicka, "War in the Aegean, 333–331 B.C.: A Reconsideration," *Phoenix* 42 (1988) 143–151.

Alexander himself was actually engaged in subduing Greek rebels. But, while historically the timing of the hostilities with Agis meant that they had to be dealt with by one of Alexander's lieutenants, in the *Romance* Alexander, unhindered by logistical realities, returns to put down the Greek resistance in person.

Alexander must appear in person because of the sort of work the *Romance* is. The *Alexander Romance* was written not as a history of Alexander's campaigns, and certainly not a history of his times, but more as something of a biography, or perhaps a personal romance. The spotlight never leaves Alexander. The doings related in the *Romance* are either the deeds of Alexander himself or impinge upon him directly. Likewise, Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, which is explicitly written as a biography, not a history, gives no indication of goings on back in Greece except as they are intimated in Alexander's correspondence (and even these letters reveal far more about Alexander, his deeds and character, than about events) or adumbrated by mention of the ill-feeling and conspiracies of Antipater and his sons. But the *Romance* has pretensions beyond the remit of a biography and presents itself, at any rate, as a history. In consequence of the *Romance's* basically biographical nature and its attempts to accommodate events from Alexander's reign in which he had no direct role, actions that were historically deputed to his agents and subordinates are assigned in the *Romance* to Alexander himself. This assumption of all activity by Alexander even insinuates itself into the *Romance's* characterization of Alexander as active and involved when Darius' brother urges Darius to imitate Alexander and not entrust the conduct of the war to his satraps but to lead the army himself (2.7.6). What the historical Alexander ordered or accomplished through the agency of others, the Alexander of the *Romance* does himself, so that he is the protagonist of every scene.

A similar situation seems to obtain in the case of Alexander's visit to Ethiopia in the *Romance* (3.18–23). Pfister suggested

some time ago that the *Romance's* account of Alexander going to Ethiopia was inspired by reports of the expedition of explorers Alexander is supposed to have sent to Ethiopia from Egypt.<sup>28</sup> This exploratory mission is not mentioned in any of our central sources on Alexander, but its findings seem to be attested in a number of references, and the historicity of some such mission has been tentatively confirmed by recent studies.<sup>29</sup> At any rate, there is no suggestion that Alexander led this expedition to Ethiopia himself; he is, rather, supposed to have ordered it to be undertaken. But once again, the *Romance* takes the things done by Alexander's underlings and under his auspices and turns them into the deeds of Alexander himself, since it has Alexander leave his army and go off to Ethiopia.

There is a particularly pressing reason, moreover, for the *Romance* to attribute the Macedonian triumph over the Spartans to Alexander himself. In this case his deputed agent was Antipater. Alexander's relations with his regent could be strained at times, and Curtius reports that Antipater's victory at Megalopolis especially aroused the envy and indignation of Alexander (6.1.18): "To be sure, Alexander wished his enemies to be defeated, but he was by no means silent in expressing his displeasure that Antipater had won the victory, thinking that whatever he had to cede to another's was subtracted from his own glory" (*quippe Alexander hostes vinci voluerat, Antipatrum vicisse ne tacitus quidem indignabatur, suae demptum gloriae existimans, quidquid cessisset alienae*). But in the *Romance* Antipater is more than an occasionally too-capable subordinate who might provoke Alexander's jealousy; he is a traitor, a conspirator, and the murderer of the hero of the piece. The historians reported rumours that

<sup>28</sup> Friedrich Pfister, "Das Alexander-Archiv und die hellenistisch-römische Wissenschaft," *Historia* 10 (1961) 48–50.

<sup>29</sup> Stanley M. Burstein, "Alexander, Callisthenes and the Sources of the Nile," *GRBS* 17 (1976) 135–146; Gościwit Malinowski, "Alexander and the Beginning of the Greek Exploration in Nilotic Africa," in Volker Grieb et al. (eds.), *Alexander the Great and Egypt: History, Art, Tradition* (Wiesbaden 2014) 273–285.

Alexander had been poisoned with varying degrees of scepticism and credulity, but in the *Romance* the poisoning goes from being a suspicion to a fact, the plot against Alexander is described in detail, and Antipater is presented as its mastermind.<sup>30</sup> It would hardly do to give Antipater credit for defeating the enemies in Alexander's rear when, as far as the *Romance* is concerned, he would prove himself to be the worst of them.

The *Romance* has Alexander replace Antipater as the victor over the Spartans, even if that means dragging him back half way across Asia, for the sake of compositional consistency. Such consistency, though, appears to be one of the foremost considerations in the arrangement of the *Alexander Romance*, especially in its original composition as represented by the  $\alpha$  recension. The redactor of the  $\beta$  recension seems to have been willing to sacrifice a measure of this consistency in the interests of historical accuracy. The results are not necessarily satisfactory.

For instance, the  $\beta$  recension's reduplication of Alexander's suppression of the Greek revolt, setting one instance before, as well as another in the midst of, his Persian campaign, may be

<sup>30</sup> *Al.Rom.* 3.31; cf. Diod. 17.117.5–17.118.2; Curt. 10.10.14–19; Plut. *Alex.* 77.1–3; Arr. *Anab.* 7.27.1–2; Just., *Epit.* 12.13.10–12.14.9. On the report of Alexander being poisoned see A. B. Bosworth, "The Death of Alexander the Great: Rumour and Propaganda," *CQ* 21 (1971) 112–136; Donald Engels, "A Note on Alexander's Death," *CP* 73 (1978) 224–228; Elizabeth Visser, "Alexander's Last Days in Hellenistic and Roman Tradition," in W. Aerts et al. (eds.), *Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages* (Nijmegen 1978) 2–9; A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1988) 171–173; Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon* (Berkeley 1991) 475–478; Charalambos N. Sbarounis, "Did Alexander the Great Die of Acute Pancreatitis?" *Journal of Clinical Gastroenterology* 24 (1997) 294–296; D. W. Oldach, R. E. Richard, E. N. Borza, and R. M. Benitez, "A Mysterious Death," *New England Journal of Medicine* 338 (1998) 1764–1769; Eugene Borza and Jeanne Reames-Zimmerman, "Some New Thoughts on the Death of Alexander the Great," *AncW* 31 (2000) 22–30; A. B. Bosworth, "Alexander's Death: The Poisoning Rumors," in James Romm, *The Landmark Arrian, The Campaigns of Alexander* (New York 2010) 407–410.

more true to the historical record—if only slightly—but it undermines the *Romance*'s depiction of Alexander as a freedom fighter on behalf of the Greeks. This role for Alexander is largely implied in the  $\alpha$  recension, where Alexander refuses to pay the customary tribute to the Persian emissaries and Darius says to Alexander, “you did not consider yourself fortunate to rule Macedonia unnoticed under my command.”<sup>31</sup> The  $\beta$  recension rather more clearly presents Alexander as the liberator of the Greeks, having him call on the Greeks and Macedonians to “mount an expedition against the barbarians and free ourselves from slavery to the Persians, since, being Greeks, we ought not to be enslaved to barbarians”<sup>32</sup> and to conduct a preliminary foray into Persian territory (absent from the  $\alpha$  recension) as far as the Aegean coast of Asia Minor,<sup>33</sup> where, according to the historians, Alexander proclaimed the independence of the Greek cities of Asia and declared that he had undertaken the war for the sake of the freedom of the Greeks (τῆς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐλευθερώσεως ἔνεκα).<sup>34</sup> This depiction of Alexander as the liberator of Greece, ironically more explicit in the  $\beta$  recension than the  $\alpha$ , is undercut by Alexander's efforts to establish his dominance over the Greeks before he fights the Persians in the  $\beta$  recension. The version in the  $\alpha$  recension, in which Alexander quells only one Greek uprising, once he has

<sup>31</sup> *Al.Rom.* ( $\alpha$ ) 1.23.2–4, 1.40.3; 45 Kroll: οὐ μακάριον ἡγήσω λανθάνοντά σε βασιλεύειν Μακεδονίας χωρὶς τῆς ἐμῆς ταγῆς.

<sup>32</sup> *Al.Rom.* ( $\beta$ ) 1.25.1; 37 Bergson: καταστρατευσώμεθα τοῖς βαρβάροις καὶ ἑαυτοὺς ἐλευθερώσωμεν τῆς τῶν Περσῶν δουλείας ἵνα μὴ Ἕλληνες ὄντες βαρβάροις δουλεύωμεν. Cf. ( $\beta$ ) 3.32.4, where Alexander is told at his death that he made Macedonia free.

<sup>33</sup> *Al.Rom.* ( $\beta$ ) 1.26.3–1.29.1.

<sup>34</sup> Diod. 17.24.1, cf. 16.91.2; Arr. *Anab.* 1.18.2. See C. Bradford Welles, “Greek Liberty,” *JJurP* 15 (1965) 38–42; Robin Seager and Christopher Tuplin, “The Freedom of the Greeks of Asia: On the Origins of a Concept and the Creation of a Slogan,” *JHS* 100 (1980) 141–154; Robin Seager, “The Freedom of the Greeks of Asia: From Alexander to Antiochus,” *CQ* 31 (1981) 106–112; Sviatoslav Dmitriev, *The Greek Slogan of Freedom and Early Roman Politics in Greece* (Oxford 2011) 90–108.

proven himself the champion of the Greeks and at the expense of the momentum of his war against the Persians, may play havoc with the historical record, but makes back-stabbing ingrates of Alexander's Greek opponents and leaves him an unblemished hero. It makes for a better story, even if it must baffle and infuriate the student of history.

Thus one of the most puzzling aberrations from the historical record in the *Alexander Romance*, Alexander's return to Greece in the midst of his eastern campaign, appears to result from a number of factors. First, and perhaps most important, is the nature of the *Alexander Romance* itself. It is essentially a romantic or novelistic biography whose attention is undeviatingly concentrated on its hero, to such an extent that Alexander is almost always the active and central figure in any episode. The *Romance*, nevertheless, has pretensions to being a history and seeks to include events from his reign in which historically Alexander had no direct role. These two impulses together cause the *Romance* to assign the actions of his subordinates to Alexander himself. Another factor is the *Romance's* literary aim of offering a clear and uncomplicated, as well as consistent and cohesive, narrative, an aim most evident in the  $\alpha$  recension. It results in the Spartan war against Alexander being combined with the revolt of the other Greek states, although the timing of the war with Agis is retained for all of them together, and in the refusal to credit any commendable action to Antipater, a villain of the deepest dye in the *Romance*, even though he was in reality responsible for defeating Alexander's enemies in Greece while the king was away fighting the Persians. The redactor of the  $\beta$  recension, however, places a greater premium on historical accuracy, even at the expense of consistent composition; his efforts to achieve historical veracity are piecemeal and fail to take into account their effect on the overall narrative. Finally, the episode of Alexander's return to Greece also seems to have found inspiration or corroboration in an inept but imaginative misconstruction of certain passages in Plutarch's *De fortuna Alex-*

*andri*, which may have been taken to suggest the imposition of a backward movement on Alexander's march and Cilicia as a crucial pivot point in his progress.<sup>35</sup>

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