

audience of? What practical difference did it make? Was the ‘propaganda’ convincing and what were its consequences?

Beyond audience, we might consider the creators behind royal propaganda. It is easy to attribute everything to Alexander or Ptolemy as master propagandists, but neither ran an Orwellian ‘Ministry of Truth’. To a large extent, the development and dissemination of royal propaganda would have been undertaken outside the king’s watchful eye by poets, courtiers, commanders and members of the native elite who understood how the king wanted to be or should be represented. Alexander and Ptolemy had no Joseph Goebbels or Leni Riefenstahl, but as kings they appear to us as the most visible tip of a large and deep process of royal image-making that took place, probably competitively, at court and must have involved numerous different advisors and decision makers.

Overall, this book is a mixed bag. The topic is a worthy one, but the focus and quality fluctuates. At its best, there is the core of an excellent volume, but as it stands, it is too unfocused. Only four papers concern Alexander and the theme of propaganda (Anson, Müller, Bowden, and Wheatley and Dunn – and perhaps the first half of Baynham’s). Two concern Ptolemaic propagandist use of Alexander’s memory, also relevant and important (Howe and Pownall). The remainder (Walsh, Landucci and Roisman) say almost nothing about Alexander and only intermittently, if at all, discuss propaganda. The book arose from the 2013 Australasian Society for Classical Studies conference, but, unfortunately, some of the papers presented there on the topic of propaganda are not found in the volume. The introduction is superficial, and there is no conclusion to tie the arguments together. Readers wanting a detailed examination of propaganda and strategies of legitimation during the reign of Alexander will have to look elsewhere.

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## ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND HIS RECEPTION

STONEMAN (R.) (ed.) *A History of Alexander the Great in World Culture*. Pp. xvi + 454, b/w & colour ills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Cased, £120, US\$155. ISBN: 978-1-107-16769-8. doi:10.1017/S0009840X22002001

Stoneman’s latest, edited volume does not disappoint. He brings to bear a lifetime of experience on a notoriously complex and convoluted subject. The range of scholarly contributors is well chosen and well organised, with material spanning many eras, east and west. The book is mostly about later receptions of the famous Macedonian conqueror, his *Nachleben*, and the diffusion and reinterpretation of his image (actual and imagined) by multiple cultures for multiple ends. In this respect, it bears some similarity to another recent volume, *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Alexander the Great* (2018), edited by the author of this review, including four of the same contributors. Some of the themes covered here recall those in the Brill volume, for example: art history, Roman receptions, late antiquity, the Jewish tradition, Byzantine, Medieval and modern receptions. However, there is no overlap between these works. Stoneman’s book may be regarded as expanding upon topics not fully explored in the earlier volume; indeed, its editor can confirm that, exhaustive as it was, it barely scratched the surface of the titanic legacy that is the reception

of Alexander the Great. Stoneman and his contributors have added more to our understanding of that heritage, enhancing scholarly scrutiny of what is probably the closest to a truly universal phenomenon as any trope from the ancient past may arguably be regarded as being.

In the preface Stoneman acknowledges that there have been multiple works written on this subject, including his own *Alexander the Great: a Life in Legend* (2008). He opens with an almost comedic quip by a hypothetical reader exclaiming: 'Not another Companion?' Stoneman goes on to observe that the intellectual landscape of this subject is so vast that even with twenty years of research, as he writes, 'there were aspects of the study that I was barely able to touch' (p. xiii). He also laments the dearth in western scholarship on African and 'Far Eastern' receptions of Alexander, rightly recognising S.F. Ng's *Alexander the Great from Britain to Southeast Asia* (2019) for attentively filling some of that void. Stoneman's introduction briefly covers the history of Alexander III and summarises receptions and *topoi* about him spanning from his own era to the present. He notes the 'currency' of the topic in the modern world, including recent political issues relating to North Macedonia, along with the reinvention of Alexander in films such as that by Oliver Stone. And Alexander is truly 'current', as the author of this review can attest: having been recently in Greece for an academic conference, I observed that famous name on many lips, in the scholarly symposium and on the streets, from bustling Athens to sacred Delphi. Such an enduring persona provides more than sufficient justification for continued study. In the preface and introduction Stoneman does a fine job of presenting the chosen material with due diligence, as only a consummate scholar of Alexander could do, as well as providing detailed introductions for individual chapters.

D.J. Thompson's chapter addresses the theme of Alexander's legacy in Alexandria, his brief visit there, the exploitation of his image by the Ptolemaic dynasty and the fate of his tomb. She explores multiple interpretations of the fate of Alexander's body, focusing in particular on the sarcophagus of Nectanebo II. Thompson's chapter dovetails well with O. Palagia's contribution (in testament to skilful order) on Alexander's image in ancient art. Palagia traces the earliest images of Alexander in Macedon, under Philip II, and thence into the Hellenistic era, including Ptolemaic Egypt and Rome. There are some beautiful illustrations in support of her exploration of art-historical receptions.

S. Asirvatham focuses on a 'specifically Trajanic moment' of the reception of Alexander in the works of Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom and Arrian. This reinvention is aptly exemplified by Plutarch's *De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute*, which styles him as a philosopher king 'in action' as opposed to one in the academic sense. Asirvatham argues that this and other such representations reflect Trajan's own legacy as a Panhellene, following on from 'the Greekling' Hadrian. She discusses a range of other philosophers, including some of the Stoics, and their impressions of Alexander, concluding that the overly philosophical receptions from the Trajanic era are somewhat stretched and artificial, reflecting more an agenda than a reality. C. Djurslev, by contrast but not dissimilarly, explores the Christianisation of Alexander in late antiquity. A range of Jewish and early Christian writers, among them some Neo-Platonists such as Porphyry, are deployed with their frequent recourse to Josephus' rather apocryphal account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, and his allegedly prophetic dream. Djurslev argues that these scholars used remarkably adaptive receptions to selectively and insistently bolster their claims to antiquity.

Aptly following on from this, O. Amitay addresses the theme of Alexander in Jewish literature, including Josephus, but also with regard to the Book of Daniel, which he seems to believe may have been re-written specifically for Alexander, and not without cause. Amitay also addressed some of these elements in the earlier *Companion*; however, this chapter explores a different range of materials, including archaeological evidence in

support of the literature, with an emphasis on the *Tamid* story, which gives a positive reception of Alexander. Bearing such representations in mind, M. Pérez-Simon considers medieval receptions in the *Romance* tradition, especially with regard to the Crusades and the Hundred Years' War. A wide range of examples are explored with ample use of illustrations to form a nuanced interpretation of the uses of Alexander's moral *exemplum* by medieval writers. Appositely, M. Cruse focuses more on the image of Alexander in the Crusades. He considers how the *Romance* tradition opened up the east to the western imagination, a recurring theme in multiple eras. This chapter also deploys some excellent images.

S. Torres Prieto elucidates early modern Slavic receptions of Alexander, ranging from Macedon to Moscow, and how the Russian Orthodox Church exploited the Conqueror's image, in writing and in art, for their own ends. The Slavic, 'malleable' Alexander, much like his medieval receptions elsewhere, was often deployed as a model for princes. Clearly connected with that image of Alexander, A. Kaldellis examines the Byzantine tradition, noting how a 'protean' Alexander was adapted for different epochs of the Empire's existence. R. Rabone returns to Europe with a 'Spanish Alexander'. He examines an extensive range of medieval literary sources that often portray Alexander as a praiseworthy figure, but also as an example to be censored and avoided, his downfall 'deserved but lamentable'. H. Manteghi returns to Asia with an exploration of Alexander as the Persian *Shanashah*. The works of Firdowsi and Asadi Tusi figure prominently. The next chapter, by Stoneman, is also on Persian receptions. He too considers Firdowsi, Nizami, Amir Khusraw and others; however, his emphasis is on the Persian fascination for Greek culture, especially the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, and how receptions of Alexander served to forward these traditions. Along related lines, F. Doufkar-Aerts discusses medieval, Arab accounts of Alexander and his assimilation into Islamic conventions. There he is a multifaceted figure, regarded as an archetypal king, philosopher and warrior. Next, Stoneman's second chapter marks a return to Europe, with receptions of Alexander in the Shakespearean era. He focuses primarily on the poet Sir William Alexander and his literary take on his famous namesake. The absence of John Lyly is notable; but his *Campaspe* does not figure readily into the theme of this chapter, and its absence may be forgiven. Moving on temporally if not spatially, J. Solomon considers the topic of Alexander in seventeenth-century Italian opera, noting how this theme fell out of favour after the French Revolution, when any royalty was suspect.

P. Briant considers the reception of Alexander after J.G. Droysen (as well as prior to him) in the 'Long Eighteenth Century'. He connects this reception with the opening up of global trade (also a theme of Ng's book), as well as Enlightenment-era philosophy. J. Wiesehöfer explores the 'German' reception of Alexander from the medieval Lamprecht der Pfaffe to the nineteenth-century Droysen, to the era of the World Wars and beyond. Briant's and Wiesehöfer's chapters dovetail nicely, connecting but not overlapping. Wiesehöfer's has a broad remit, and it should be noted that R. Bichler undertook a more thorough treatment of Alexander's reception in the era of the World Wars in the earlier *Companion*; but Wiesehöfer's chapter captures a shifting cultural *Zeitgeist* that is outside Bichler's aims, and he extensively cites the latter where relevant.

The final chapter, by L. Llewellyn-Jones and S. Tougher, brings us to the cutting edge of (post)modernity, with a look at receptions of Alexander vis-à-vis the LGBTQ+ community. They consider vacillating and politically charged interpretations that contentiously try to claim Alexander as either 'gay' or 'not gay', following from R. Lane Fox's 1973 biography to the present. Mary Renault and Gore Vidal figure prominently in this analysis. Pornography and Broadway musicals are also referenced as

partaking of the shifting struggle to present Alexander, usually concerning his relationship with Hephaestion, as some kind of ‘gay icon’. The negative reaction by the Greek state authorities, pressing legal action against the Stone film, is noted. So too is how the theme of Alexander’s putative same-sex relationships figured in the US army’s ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ debate, alongside the wider discourse on the legality of same-sex marriage. This chapter observes how the reception of Alexander has accompanied, influenced and been influenced by the sexual revolutions from the second half of the twentieth century to the present. They conclude that Alexander is not just a ‘gay hero’ but also ‘the ultimate fantasy whose kiss we continue to crave’ (p. 445). This chapter is a fitting conclusion to Stoneman’s book. It aptly illustrates how the re-imagined Macedonian Conqueror continues to influence modern society in surprising and highly relevant ways.

One could perhaps be slightly critical of the work for omitting ‘Far Eastern’ receptions, of which there are surprisingly many, and which were also not generally covered in the *Brill Companion*. We should actively recognise that they comprise important aspects of ‘World Culture’. Even so, as indicated, some East Asian receptions have been fairly well considered by Ng’s book, as Stoneman is aware. He is also aware that it would be beneficial to see more research on African, Chinese and Japanese receptions of Alexander, typically lacking in western academic writing. That gap will be for future scholars to fill. Stoneman’s book is nonetheless a most welcome addition to the ongoing endeavours of Alexander scholarship and will prove a useful tool for academics and students alike – or, in fact, for anyone interested in the far-ranging themes, receptions and legacies of Alexander the Great.

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## THE LIFE AND DEEDS OF DEMETRIUS

WHEATLEY (P.), DUNN (C.) *Demetrius the Besieger*. Pp. xx + 496, ills, maps. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Cased, £115, US\$155. ISBN: 978-0-19-883604-9.

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The book under review provides a long-overdue assessment of one of the most crucial characters in the succession wars after the death of Alexander the Great, namely, Demetrius Poliorcetes or ‘the Besieger’, the son of Antigonos Monophthalmus or ‘the One-Eyed’. Since Demetrius’ first biographer, Plutarch, paired his life with that of Mark Antony, there has been no comprehensive full-scale biography, as Wheatley and Dunn note in the introduction. This gap has been a standing outrage and reproach to scholars of the Hellenistic world. The reason why is probably that Demetrius was a colourful character, and that the source material for his career is problematic. Added to that is the mind-bending nature of the High and Low chronology impeding the study of the early Successor period (see T. Boiy, *Between High and Low* [2007]). With this book many of these issues have now been addressed. In the words of one of the authors, paraphrased from a recorded lecture to the Antigonid Network (<https://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/theantigonidnetwork/events/> [accessed 15/09/2022]), this is the kind of large-scale