

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: CONTESTING THE GREATNESS OF
ALEXANDER THE GREAT: THE
REPRESENTATION OF ALEXANDER IN
THE HISTORIES OF POLYBIUS AND LIVY

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History

By investigating the works of Polybius and Livy, we can discuss an important aspect of the impact of Alexander upon the reputation and image of Rome. Because of the subject of their histories and the political atmosphere in which they were writing - these authors, despite their generally positive opinions of Alexander, ultimately created scenarios where they portrayed the Romans as superior to the Macedonian king. This study has five primary goals: to produce a commentary on the various Alexander passages found in Polybius' and Livy's histories; to establish the generally positive opinion of Alexander held by these two writers; to illustrate that a noticeable theme of their works is the ongoing comparison between Alexander and Rome; to demonstrate Polybius' and Livy's belief in Roman superiority, even over Alexander; and finally to create an understanding of how this motif influences their greater narratives and alters our appreciation of their works.

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AND LIVY

By

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Dedication

in amorem matris

Janet L. Farrow

θρεπτήρια

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Introduction

The influence of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.E.) on Roman military actions and cultural expression was significant during the mid and late Republican periods (274-28 B.C.E.), the Principate (27 B.C.E.-283 C.E.), and even during the Dominate (284-476 C.E.). Several prominent Roman statesmen emulated the great king and attempted to follow in his military footsteps.¹ This study will investigate the influence of Alexander the Great on the Roman world of the mid and late Republican periods, also focusing on the effects that the great Macedonian had on the ever evolving concept of what it meant to be Roman during the Romans' rise to hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean. Through comparisons and associations of Alexander and his accomplishments with the Roman state, the Romans came to define further what it meant to be Roman.

The world that Alexander left behind in 323 B.C.E. considered the great king as unrivalled in military success. The Diadochi (or "Successors") of Alexander were eager to share in his glory but were unable to match his military accomplishments. It was the Romans who came to contest the greatness of Alexander. The Romans respected his remarkable martial prowess, seeing themselves as the true successors of the world hegemony briefly created by Alexander. They too wished to share in his glory.

¹ The Romans found the military achievements and abilities of Alexander both culturally attractive and politically suitable for the necessary transition of power in the East from Hellenistic monarchies to a strong Roman authority. See Cornelius Clarkson Vermeule, *Alexander the Great Conquers Rome* (Cambridge, Mass: Sir Northwold Nuffler Foundation Press, 1986), 2. In addition, Pompey, Caesar, Antony, and Trajan all enthusiastically patterned themselves on the image and accomplishments of Alexander. Note Arthur M. Eckstein, "Conceptualizing Roman Imperial Expansion under the Republic: An Introduction," in *A Companion to the Roman Republic*, ed. Robert Morstein-Marx and Nathan Rosenstein (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 585 and n.113.

As the Romans rose to power steadily over the Mediterranean world in the third, second, and first centuries B.C.E., they came into contact and conflict with the various successor kingdoms created after Alexander's death.² Rome's military victories over the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.E.) and over the successor kingdoms in the first half of the second century B.C.E. gave her a dominant position in the Mediterranean world. The power Rome was building in the West came to rival the power that Alexander had built in the East. Two of our main sources for the rise of Rome in the Mediterranean Basin are Polybius (ca. 150 B.C.E.) and Livy (ca. 15 B.C.E.). Both writers possessed a deep respect for the vast accomplishments of Alexander; however, they believed that another power was greater, Rome. This study will discuss the image of Alexander in the writings of Polybius and Livy. In addition, it will demonstrate how these writers employed his image to construct a concept of Roman superiority and to champion Roman virtues and abilities.

Unlike the examples of Roman admiration or emulation of Alexander the Great found in most Roman sources concerning Alexander and his achievements, these two writers, Polybius and Livy, addressed the impact and importance of Alexander in a different and sometimes less flattering manner. A major subject of their histories, i.e. the rise of Rome to supremacy in the Mediterranean world, lent itself to comparisons with Alexander. The conflicts between the Hellenistic states created after Alexander's death and Rome during the late third and second centuries B.C.E. are at the center of Polybius'

² These were most notably the Antigonid Kingdom in Macedonia, the Seleucid Empire based in Syria, and the Ptolemaic Kingdom in Egypt.

and Livy's works.³ Additionally, the tension between Macedon and the Achaean League is present in Polybius's history. The actions of the Hellenistic states and their interaction with Rome thus are of fundamental importance. Rome came to dominate a large section of the world once ruled by Alexander; this point is not lost on Polybius and Livy. These aspects undoubtedly had an effect on their portrayal of Alexander and give us an important and different perspective on the relationship created between Rome and the great Macedonian.

For the audience, certain questions are raised by Polybius' and Livy's accounts. Was Alexander really as great as he is thought to be? Was he a friend or an enemy of the Greeks? Were the Romans superior to him? Could Alexander have conquered the Romans? Polybius and Livy address these themes throughout their works. Although respect for Alexander is clearly visible, one crucial theme permeates these men's histories: Alexander may have been great, but the Romans were greater. Their accounts advance this motif both directly and indirectly. The Romans are established as Alexander's true successor, as hegemon of the world, and the extent of their hegemony and the manner in which they achieved this glory are described as superior. Both writers convey the relationship between Alexander and the Romans in a different manner than most of our other ancient sources. Instead of transparent examples of emulation and praise, in Polybius and Livy we find resistance to the idea of Alexander's universal

³ It is important to note that since Livy often used Polybius as his principle source, especially for his accounts of the eastern Mediterranean, many of the points that I argue herein, concerning Livy, also reflect similarly on Polybius. See Heinrich Nissen, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Quellen der vierten und fünften Dekade des Livius* (Berlin, 1863), 249, 254, and 341; and F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Vol. 3, commentary on Books XIX-XL* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 23.

superiority in military greatness. This comes in the form of an ongoing competitive comparison between Rome and Alexander.

By investigating the works of Polybius and Livy, we can discuss and understand an important aspect of the impact of Alexander the Great upon the reputation and image of Rome. This study hopes to illustrate that because of the subject of their histories - namely the rise of Rome to Mediterranean dominance, and due to the political atmosphere in which Polybius and Livy were writing, namely Rome's establishment of hegemony over the Greek east for Polybius and the complete submission of the Mediterranean basin under Augustine Rome for Livy - these authors, despite their generally positive opinions of Alexander, ultimately created scenarios where they portrayed the Romans as superior to the Macedonian king.

In order to legitimize Roman achievements, Polybius and Livy were forced to use Alexander as a backdrop since he had set the bar to which all others strove to grasp. Thus, these men depict Alexander as the optimum counterpoint to Rome. Yet, the desire to praise Roman accomplishments often leads to unfair and misleading arguments. This study will discuss where these comparisons arise in their texts, in order to demonstrate that Alexander's impact on Polybius and Livy, although their accounts differ from the traditional "Alexander historians," is no less fruitful or important to our further understanding of Alexander's influence on the Romans and the recording of their history. Ultimately, this study has five primary goals: to produce a distinctive commentary on the various passages found in Polybius' and Livy's histories where they either directly mention Alexander or where we can infer an Alexander reference from the contexts; to establish the generally positive opinion of Alexander held by these two writers; to

illustrate that a noticeable theme of their works is the ongoing comparison between Alexander and Rome; to demonstrate that Polybius and Livy thought that the Romans were superior even to Alexander; and finally to create an understanding of how this motif influences their greater narratives and alters our appreciation of their works.

The Romans conquered bearded barbarians and sophisticated Greeks, daring Carthaginians and mighty Hellenic kings; yet through all this, the reputation of Alexander had remained insurmountable. With the rise of Rome to supremacy over the Mediterranean, this was the occasion to challenge Alexander's position as the greatest conqueror of all time. Polybius and Livy both believed this and their histories reflect it. It was first necessary to associate the Romans with Alexander and then to represent them as superior to him.⁴ In the arena of war, the image of Alexander came to help establish what it meant to be Roman and, at the international level, who the Romans were. Alexander became the prime example of what to do and what not to do.⁵ Polybius and Livy understood the power that his name evoked and they used this power to express Rome's rise to unmatched preeminence through the comparisons with Alexander. The military vigor and the vast accomplishments of Alexander were something to emulate and respect.

⁴ Livy especially adopted this "one versus many" motif in his digression on Alexander. See Ruth Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression (9.17-19): Counterfactuals and Apologetics," *Journal of Roman Studies* 92 (2002): 69.

⁵ S. P. Oakley, *A Commentary on Livy, Books VI-X: Volume III: Book IX* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 188.

Yet, for these two writers, although Alexander may have been great, the Romans were greater.⁶

⁶ We see a similar theme involving Cato the Elder's opinion of Roman superiority to the Hellenic world. Cato did not view Hellenism negatively; rather, he recognized its qualities. However, he ultimately saw it as inferior. For Cato, Rome was not only politically and militarily superior, but also culturally superior. This has clear parallels with Polybius' and Livy's opinions, although Polybius' opinion is especially interesting since he was a Greek. For the Catonian theme of the Greeks as great, but the Romans as greater, see Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 66-83.

Chapter I

Polybius the Statesman and Author

During the Roman Republic, famous writers such as Polybius and Livy discussed Alexander mostly in comparison to and in potential conflict with the Roman military. Compared to the numerous examples of Alexander admiration, emulation, or apologetic that ancient writers usually recorded, this is a different form of influence that Alexander had on the conceptions of Roman history. Instead of citing multiple examples of the Roman fascination with and reverence toward the great king, like those that would become common during the first century B.C.E. to the fourth century C.E., both Polybius and Livy argued for the superiority of the Romans over the great Macedonian.⁷

To be clear, Polybius was not a Roman. He was a political prisoner from Achaea held in the custody of the Romans. Still, he also possessed a privileged position in Rome with access to the highest strata of Roman society. While in Rome, he became concerned with the recording of Roman history and Roman interactions within the ancient Mediterranean world. As it happens, he is our earliest surviving written source on

⁷ As we shall see, men of the Roman mid-Republic such as Lucius Papirius Cursor and Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus were likened to Alexander. The tradition of associating Roman statesmen with Alexander existed long before its popularization during the Roman Empire. Alexander's influence was especially felt during the Late Republic under the mighty statesmen Pompey, Caesar, Crassus, and Antony, all of whom emulated the great king and attempted to follow in his footsteps. Crassus and Antony both organized and led campaigns into the East, while Caesar and Pompey, who did not campaign against the Parthian East, have both been likened to the Macedonian king multiple times through images and text. The later emperors were in an even more advantageous position to emulate Alexander, through their campaigns and public works, than the majority of their republican counterparts simply because they commanded more economic, political, and social power. The trend of Alexander emulation did not lose steam as the years progressed and arguably became more potent.

Alexander.⁸ The majority of histories involving Alexander come from writers of the Principate, most notably the biographers Arrian and Curtius Rufus, though their histories are based on accounts of Alexander that were near-contemporary with his life.

Although Alexander's life is not the focus of Polybius' work, what Polybius records about Alexander and the Roman association with him is significant to our understanding of Alexander's impact on the conceptualization of Rome's rise to dominance. Richard Billows relates that "there are fourteen passages in Polybius which express substantial and interesting views of our judgments concerning Alexander."⁹ As a Greek statesman living and writing during the mid-second century B.C.E., Polybius' opinion on the Roman relationship with Alexander and his Macedonian successors offers a distinctive and important perspective. This perspective is one of the points of emphasis for this study.

One must note that Polybius, through all his discussions of Roman and Macedonian relations and his comparisons between Rome and Macedon, did not address Alexander directly in some cases. For instance, in his digression on the Macedonian phalanx, he describes mostly the Macedonians of the late third and early second centuries B.C.E., not the Macedonians of Alexander's day. However, Polybius chose this comparison because, in this case, his subject was the superiority of the Roman manipular legion over the Macedonian pikeman phalanx that the Romans confronted in the wars against Alexander's successors. Even so, it is still appropriate to discuss Polybius' comparison of the manipular legion and pikeman phalanx clash because he characterizes

⁸ Richard Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," in *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction*, ed. A. B. Bosworth and E. J. Baynham (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2000), 288.

⁹ *Ibid.* 289.

the superiority of the former over the latter. The makeup and tactics of the Macedonian phalanx had changed since the days of Philip II and Alexander the Great, and potentially in adverse ways (namely additional depth limiting flexibility and less emphasis on a dominant heavy cavalry wing); but the tactics and equipment would not have appeared completely foreign to these men.¹⁰ The Romans conquered much of the Mediterranean world with their manipular legions just as Alexander conquered much of the ancient world with the pikeman phalanx army. The indirect comparison of Alexander and Rome thus is not lost on the reader. In addition, Polybius makes no distinction between King Perseus' Macedonian army in the mid-second century B.C.E. and that of Alexander, which makes the comparison with the Roman legion all the more interesting. Apart from this digression, what we must emphasize is Polybius' preference of the Romans over Alexander the Great and his reasoning for these arguments.

Polybius was born in Arcadia near the end of the third century B.C.E. to a wealthy family. He began writing at a young age but also became involved in politics. By the 170s B.C.E., Polybius was climbing steadily up the political ladder of the Achaean League and ultimately was elected *hipparchus*, the Achaean second in command and traditional leader of the cavalry, in 170/69 B.C.E. Polybius was poised to be elected *strategos*, the highest position of the Achaean League; however, this would not come to fruition. Rome was at war with Macedon in the Third Macedonian War against King Perseus. With the King's utter defeat at Pydna in 168 B.C.E., the Romans purged the political elites of Greece, including Polybius, whom the Romans sent to Italy as a

¹⁰ John Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Weapons, Warriors and Warfare in the Ancient Civilisations of Greece and Rome*, ed. Philip de Ste. Croix (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 68, 73-74. Also, see Brian Todd Carey, *Warfare in the Ancient World* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2005), 89.

political prisoner. Once in Rome, he befriended Scipio Aemilianus and gained access to the Roman upper class. As the friend of many influential Roman aristocrats, Polybius received leave to travel the Roman world, making trips to Africa, Spain, and Gaul. Polybius witnessed the sack of Carthage in the Third Punic War firsthand.¹¹ Through his travels, he viewed the various landscapes of Rome's conquests and conducted interviews with former soldiers and officials, such as Scipio Africanus, and even the King of Numidia, Masinissa, who personally had known Hannibal.¹² Maybe most important of all was that he observed and recorded the Roman legion of his time in combat. If one combines this with his significant familiarity with Greek military knowledge, which he possessed from his political and military posts in Greece, then one can see that Polybius had the ability to give firsthand and knowledgeable insight from both sides.¹³ As a Greek aristocrat and statesman, he was also familiar with the life and actions of Alexander the Great, which his Alexander sections illustrate.

Defender of the Greatness of Philip II, Alexander, and the Macedonians of Their Period

There should be no doubt that Polybius respected the accomplishments of Alexander. Hence, he states, "The successes that were achieved by Alexander after his father's death won for them [the Macedonians] a reputation for valor which has been universally recognized by posterity."¹⁴ Praise of the Macedonians of Philip's and Alexander's time was not universal in Greece; this is demonstrated in the arguments of

¹¹ F. W. Walbank, *Polybius: the Rise of the Roman Empire*, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1979), 12-14.

¹² *Ibid.* 14.

¹³ *Ibid.* 12-13.

¹⁴ Polyb. 8.10

Demosthenes, Theopompus, and Chlaeneas, just to name a few.¹⁵ However, Polybius made it a point to defend these kings and their character against the attacks of previous historians. Polybius, arguing how to write history correctly, states, “My own opinion is that we should neither revile nor extol kings falsely, as has so often been done, but always give an account of them consistent with our previous statements and in accord with the character of each.”¹⁶ Polybius labels Theopompus as a writer who failed in this standard arguing, “In this respect Theopompus is one of the writers who is most to blame.”¹⁷ Polybius records Theopompus’ opinion of Philip II and his court as follows:

At the outset of his [Theopompus’] history of Philip, son of Amyntas, he states that what chiefly induced him to undertake this work was that Europe had never produced such a man before as this Philip; and yet immediately afterwards in his preface and throughout the book he shows him [Philip] to have been first so promiscuous with women, that he did everything in his power to ruin his own home by his passionate and ostentatious addiction to this kind of thing; next a most wicked and mischievous man in his schemes for forming friendships and alliances; thirdly, one who had enslaved and betrayed a large number of cities by force or fraud; and lastly, one so addicted to strong drink that he was frequently seen by his friends manifestly drunk in broad daylight. Anyone who chooses to read the beginning of his forty-ninth Book will be amazed at the extravagance of this writer. Apart from other things, he has ventured to write as follows. I set down the passage in his own words: “Philip’s court in Macedonia was the gathering-place of all the most debauched and brazen-faced characters in Greece or abroad, who were there styled the king’s companions. For Philip in general showed no favor to men of good repute who were careful of their property, but those he honored and promoted were spendthrifts who passed their time drinking and gambling. In consequence he not only encouraged them in their vices, but made them past masters in every kind of wickedness and lewdness. Was there anything indeed disgraceful and shocking that they did not practice, and was there anything good and creditable that they did not leave undone? Some of them used to shave their bodies and make them smooth although

¹⁵ See Dem. *First Philippic*, *Second Philippic*, and *Third Philippic*; and Polyb. 8.10 and 9.28-39

¹⁶ Polyb. 8.8.7

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 8.9.1.

they were men, and others actually practiced lewdness with each other though bearded. While carrying about two or three minions with them they served others in the same capacity, so that we would be justified in calling them not courtiers but courtesans and not soldiers but male prostitutes. For being by nature man-slayers they became by their practices man-whores. In a word," he continues, "not to drag out the subject, and especially as I am beset by such a mass of other matters, my opinion is that those who were called Philip's friends and companions were worse brutes and of a more beastly disposition than the Centaurs who established themselves on Pelion, or those Laestrygones who dwelt in the plain of Leontini, or any other monsters."¹⁸

The passage portrays Philip as a sex addict, wicked, ruthless, untrustworthy, and as a drunk. It also describes his Macedonian court as a den of debauchery and disgraceful actions. Polybius remarks in stark opposition to Theopompus, "On the contrary, all those who were associated with Philip and later with Alexander showed themselves by their magnanimity, their daring, and their self-discipline to be truly royal."¹⁹ Even though Theopompus is primarily discussing Philip II in passage 8.9, Polybius made it a point to defend those associated with Alexander as well.

In fact, far from attacking Alexander, some of the pro-Macedonian arguments of Polybius are idealized and inaccurate. In his defense of Alexander and his subordinates, Polybius claims that "later, even though they came into possession of vast wealth and enjoyed unlimited opportunities to satisfy every desire, none of them suffered any deterioration of their physical strength for that reason, nor did they commit any unjust or licentious actions to gratify the demands of passion."²⁰ This claim is simply untrue and a clear example of idealizing the heroes of the past. Certainly, to cite just one example,

¹⁸ Polyb. 8.9

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 8.10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Cleitus the Black would have disagreed with such a statement when Alexander killed him in a drunken brawl in 328 B.C.E.²¹ The Macedonians enjoyed drinking and feasting.²² Alexander carried on in this tradition with his debilitating and destructive drinking habits, which continued until his death.²³

What is important to draw from these passages is Polybius' respect for Alexander and his accomplishments. Polybius develops this theme in his discussion of Callisthenes and Timaeus, where he praises Callisthenes, who lauded Alexander, stating, "Callisthenes praised a man [Alexander] whose spirit, by common consent, had in it something superhuman."²⁴ Polybius then argues that Timaeus deserved a far worse fate than Callisthenes since Timaeus wished to deify Timoleon, a relatively insignificant king of Syracuse, while Callisthenes had championed a far more worthy Alexander.²⁵ Polybius, who did not ordinarily advocate a divine presence in humans, argues that Alexander was simply greater than a normal man.²⁶ In an attack on the unworthy praise given to the allegedly minimal accomplishments of Timoleon by Timaeus soon after this, Polybius goes on to refer to Alexander as one of "the most illustrious heroes

²¹ Curt. 8.1.20-52

²² At the town of Nysa, Alexander and his soldiers held a ten day drinking binge in honor of Dionysus. Arr. *Anab.* 5.1.1-3.4; Curt. 8.10.7-18; Plut. *Alex.* 58.3-5; and Just. 12.7.6-8

²³ For Alexander's destructive drinking habits, see Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 B.C. A Historical Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 325, 360, 378, 443, 453, 464, 473, 474, and 477. Also, see Arr. *Anab.* 4.13-14, 4.8-9 *passim*, 7.24.4-25.1; Curt. 8.1.19-8.2.12; Plut. *Alex.* 50-52, 75.3; Diod. 17.117.1-3; Julian. *Caes.* 330.B-C, 331.B-C; and Just. 12.6.1-17

²⁴ Polyb. 12.23

²⁵ Callisthenes was arrested and tortured to death after he was implicated in a failed assassination attempt upon Alexander. See Arr. *Anab.* 4.14; Curt. 8.8; and Plut. *Alex.* 55.7

²⁶ In his discussion of Lycurgus and Scipio Africanus, Polybius heavily emphasizes the use of calculated action over divine aid. See Polyb. 10.2

(τοῖς ἐπιφανεστάτοις τῶν ἡρώων).”²⁷ Such statements attest to the general admiration and respect felt by Polybius for Alexander.

For Polybius, the benefits of Alexander’s actions were also apparent in his own generation. When describing the difficulties faced by earlier writers, Polybius notes the lack of free movement between Greece and much of the rest of the ancient world, which limited the scope and accuracy of Greek history writings.²⁸ He then praises Alexander’s conquests when he states, “But in our own times, partly because of the empire which Alexander established in Asia and the Romans in other parts of the world, almost all regions have become approachable either by sea or land.”²⁹ The underlying message in this statement should not go overlooked. The world in which Polybius lived was traversable as it had never been before, because of two mighty powers and their conquests. This situation allowed him and the other great minds of this period to engage in further research and expand their endeavors to a geographical scope never before possible. Polybius traversed many of the lands he discussed in his work and interviewed their peoples. He recognized that without Alexander the Great this feat would not have been easily achievable in the East, although ironically he never took up the opportunity to see the lands of the Far East firsthand, such as Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Susiane, Media, Mardoï, Paraetacene, Hyrcania, Parthia, Margiane, Areia, Drandiane, Arachosia, Carmania, Gedrosia, Parapamisos, Bactria, Sogdiana, and India.

²⁷ Polyb. 12.23

²⁸ Note that Polybius referred to the ancient world of his time, thereby signifying the early Greek historians. *Ibid.* 3.59.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 3.59.

Alexander opened up a larger world to the Greeks and Romans. The interstate system into which Rome came into contact in the East indirectly resulted from the conquests of Alexander. It is important to remember that without the campaigns of Alexander, which brought Hellenism to much of the eastern Mediterranean and the Far East, there would be no Alexandria or Antioch; there would not have been an Antiochus III or Cleopatra VII.³⁰ The diffusion of Hellenism into the Near East caused by Alexander's invasion was irreversible and came to influence the Roman occupation of the Near East well into Late Antiquity.³¹ Roman Republican history, including the works of Polybius and Livy, would be significantly different if Alexander had not conquered the Persian Empire and allowed for the creation of the Hellenistic kingdoms that followed his death.³² Therefore, the impact of Alexander on Polybius' and Livy's histories is not restricted to the sections in their writings mentioning Alexander by name. Polybius understood that the world was now larger and more accessible, owing to Alexander's conquests in the East and the Roman expansions in the West.

³⁰ Alexander was the catalyst through which all these aspects of Greek thought and culture disseminated thoroughly throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the Far East. This is not to suggest that the spread of Hellenism was absent from the ancient world before Alexander. The numerous Greek colonies scattered across the Mediterranean Basin are clear evidence against such a position. However, Alexander expanded the scope, popularity, and physical boundaries of the spread of Hellenism more than any other individual of the ancient world. It was not just Greek historians like Polybius who benefited from Alexander's conquests.

³¹ G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 29.

³² Just as Polybius and other historians benefited from the conquests of Alexander, the Romans also profited from the spread of Hellenism into the eastern Mediterranean made possible by Alexander's invasion. We should emphasize that the Romans, who eventually conquered the Hellenistic kingdoms left behind after Alexander's death, benefited immensely from the accomplishments of his conquests, seen unmistakably in numerous cultural influences acquired and adapted by the Romans in the East. The mainland Greeks had a great deal to do with this influence. Yet, it was Alexander more than any other ancient man that allowed for the spread of Greek culture throughout the majority of the ancient world. The Hellenized aspects of eastern Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt encompassed within the later Roman Empire are indirect consequences of Alexander's conquests.

In Polybius' discussion of the traversable world of his time, it is significant that Polybius offers praise to only two parties, Alexander and Rome, when he certainly could have included other worthy candidates.³³ This focused comparison of Rome and Alexander is quite consistent throughout Polybius' work and implied even in his digression on the Macedonian phalanx discussed later. When Polybius equated the accomplishments of one man, i.e. Alexander, with the accomplishments of an entire people, i.e. the Romans, the purpose was deliberate. The comparable greatness of Rome and Alexander above all else required that they be linked in discussion.

Polybius had a palpable respect for Alexander that influenced his work; yet, this high opinion does not compare to the one that he accorded the Romans. To Polybius, Alexander may have been great, but the Romans ultimately were greater. Diana Spencer recognizes that Polybius created a relationship between the Romans and Alexander when she addresses his work as emphasizing the Romans as the new power replacing the prestige of Alexander, stating, "Thus in Polybius we may be seeing the beginning of the story that would later have Livy characterize Rome itself as the super-Alexander."³⁴ Nevertheless, we find this characterization already in Polybius. However, instead of simply praising Alexander, or giving concrete examples of Roman statesmen emulating the great king, Polybius developed a formula of asserting that whatever the Macedonians could do, the Romans could do better, including the exploits of Alexander the Great.

³³ The Persians, the Greeks, and the Carthaginians would be understandable choices. Moreover, Polybius easily could have praised the kings of the Successor states in this passage.

³⁴ Diana Spencer, *The Roman Alexander: Reading a Cultural Myth* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003), 33.

A Challenge to the Idea of the Unequalled Scope of Alexander's Conquests

Polybius emphasized from the very beginning of his work this theme of asserting that Roman accomplishments were greater than those of Alexander. In addressing the far-reaching conquests of both Rome and Macedon within the ancient world, he always emphasized Roman superiority. In an attempt to diminish the achievement of Alexander's conquests in Europe, Polybius states, "The rule of the Macedonians in Europe extended only from the lands bordering the Adriatic to the Danube, which would appear to be no more than a small fraction of the continent."³⁵ This argument proves unfair.

Polybius in no way appreciates the immense difficulty involved in suppressing the various fierce and militaristic tribes of the Adriatic and Danube regions, which even Rome did not fully accomplish until the Augustan era. Furthermore, he is making a judgment based on his own knowledge of the world and not late fourth century B.C.E. Macedonian knowledge. For our purposes though, it is noteworthy that he diminishes Macedonian accomplishments in Europe.

In stressing Rome's greater conquests in Europe, Polybius is correct. The Roman conquests in the West dwarfed those of Alexander, who limited his incursions to the Balkans before moving east. By focusing on Europe, Polybius treated a major topic of his own history, namely documenting the meteoric rise to Rome to dominance in the Mediterranean world. He does this through highlighting the extent of Rome's western conquests. Yet, by emphasizing Europe alone, Polybius unfairly minimized the overall territorial accomplishments of Alexander and placed the Romans in a more favorable light.

³⁵ Polyb. 1.2

Immediately after the previous statement, in an attempt to further minimize the vast territorial expansions accomplished by the Macedonians under Alexander, Polybius adds, “Later, by overthrowing the Persian Empire, they [the Macedonians] also became the rulers of Asia; but although they were then regarded as having become the masters of a larger number of states and territories than any other people before them, they still left the greater part of the inhabited world in the hands of others.”³⁶ This, statement equally corresponds with Polybius’ attempts to make the mid-republican Roman conquests look more geographically successful than Alexander’s, when in reality they were not.³⁷ For it, too, attempts to limit the greatness of Alexander’s conquests in comparison with the Romans.

Polybius, to his credit, at least admitted that Alexander possessed at best a marginal knowledge of the West in this period, stating that “they [the Macedonians] did not even once attempt to dispute the possessions of Sicily, Sardinia, or Africa, and the most warlike tribes of western Europe were, to speak the plain truth, unknown to them.”³⁸ While one might fault Polybius for judging Alexander by his own, later, understanding of the extent of the ancient world, it is more significant that Polybius here attempts to limit the expanse of Alexander’s conquests so as to elaborate his theme that the Romans were superior to the great Macedonian.

³⁶ Polyb. 1.2

³⁷ As noted above, Polybius’ text here makes an inequitable judgment of Alexander and his Macedonians by using the geographical understandings of the mid to late second century B.C.E., not of the late fourth century B.C.E.. In addition, from an ancient perspective on “the known world” in Alexander’s period, Polybius’ statement makes an unreasonable comparison between Rome and Alexander. Lands along the coasts of the Black, Mediterranean, and Red seas, we can argue, might have been “known” or at least under peripheral awareness in the time of Alexander, due mainly to trade and Greek colonization, but not to the extent that they were understood during the Roman Republican period.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Ultimately, Polybius attempted to make the mid-republican Roman conquests look more geographically extensive than Alexander's, when in reality they were not. Polybius' argument proves deficient in several areas. Still, the fact that he made this argument is itself significant.³⁹ To be clear, Polybius' account of Alexander's conquests is not overtly negative. The goal of this Polybian passage is not to criticize Alexander's accomplishments as anything less than great; but in this passage Polybius yet again champions the Romans over Alexander, by focusing on Europe and limiting the scope of Alexander's eastern conquests. Polybius' conclusion to the section develops this theme even further.

Polybius ends the thoughts he voices in praise of Rome's great territorial achievements in comparison to those of Alexander by stating that "the Romans, on the other hand, have brought not just mere portions but *almost the whole of the world under their rule*, and have left an empire which far surpasses any that exists today or is likely to succeed it."⁴⁰ This final statement also deserves further discussion. As stressed above, Polybius shows a lack of a comprehension of the geographical scope of Alexander's Empire. He also eagerly exaggerates the power of the Romans. Such a statement is clearly misleading and inaccurate. All the same, the deficiencies of Polybius' arguments

³⁹ We must establish that even by generously including North Africa, eastern Spain, southern France, Italy, the Black Sea kingdoms, Armenia, Arabia, and northwestern India among the lands that were "known" to Alexander but that he had left unconquered at his death, one cannot easily validate the claim that he still left the greater part of the inhabited world in the hands of others. Even within the confines of the known ancient world, the lands conquered by Alexander were equal to, if not larger than the rest of the *known* inhabited world of even Polybius' time. Polybius never travelled to the Far East, which becomes evident in his account of the extent of Alexander's Empire. However, in his defense, Polybius was trying to advance the idea of Rome's superior territorial conquests, and for any ancient reader it would have been difficult to judge correctly the geographical limits of Alexander's conquests in comparison to those of the Romans without extensive and exhaustive travel to both far east and far west. Therefore, the criticism by Polybius in these statements is inappropriate, but the mistake is quite understandable.

⁴⁰ Polyb. 1.2 (The italics are mine.)

are not the focus of this study.⁴¹ This final statement clearly articulates the Polybian theme of representing the Romans as superior to Alexander. That Polybius is making an unfair comparison is less important than the fact that Polybius made this comparison at all, as part of a longer argument.

Such statements testify to Polybius' agenda of claiming the Romans as superior to Alexander the Great. His championing of Roman conquests as the greatest of all can be explained by his determination to portray them as surpassing Alexander's; we need to consider, too, the difficulties Polybius faced in order to address the challenge of diminishing Alexander's conquests. By unfairly portraying the territorial scope of Alexander's empire and exaggerating the Roman conquests during the period in which he wrote, Polybius was forced to argue around the undeniable extent of Alexander's expansions. However, we must emphasize that Polybius did not deny the greatness of Alexander's accomplishments, nor was he a harsh critic of Alexander. Polybius respected Alexander, and had a generally positive view of him. For Polybius, Alexander was still great; but Polybius thought that the Romans were greater, and formed his arguments to demonstrate and support this belief. As a result, as we have seen, he sometimes presented arguments that are untenable.

⁴¹ Briefly, we can criticize his claim on two fronts. One, the Roman state of Polybius's day was modest in size when compared to the empires of the Persians or Alexander and more importantly only a fraction of the Roman Empire's future size. Two, Polybius ignored even the ancient understanding of what constituted the world during his period in that he completely ignored Gaul, Thrace, Dacia, the Black Sea kingdoms, Anatolia, Armenia, Mauretania, Numidia, Cyrene, Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, and *every* region east of the Euphrates River conquered by Alexander. One might argue that, for Polybius, Egypt, Phoenicia, and Syria were under the hegemony of Rome after 168 B.C.E.; consequently, he considered them as part of the Roman dominion. Even so, Polybius was still guilty of inaccurately portraying Roman accomplishments as superior to Alexander's. What is more, including all the lands where the Romans and Alexander possessed hegemony would only cause further problems in comparison. Polybius' agenda of favorably comparing the Romans with Alexander the Great is evident.

A Possible Comparison between Scipio Africanus and Alexander

Another example of this Polybian theme occurs in his initial description of Scipio Africanus. Polybius declares that “he [Scipio] won greater fame than almost anyone before him.”⁴² That is certainly a bold statement, and Alexander immediately comes to mind as one of the men with whom Polybius is comparing Scipio. It is initially unclear from this statement whether Polybius thought Alexander was superior or inferior to Scipio. In as much as Alexander was more famous than Scipio, this statement alone cannot indicate Polybius’ opinion. However, Polybius’ description of Scipio’s early career, which appears to nearly parallel Alexander’s, does offer evidence that he viewed Scipio as superior in specific ways, as does his emphasis at the end of the section on Scipio’s superiority to generals who risked their lives in battle.

Scipio’s first major battle was when he was seventeen or eighteen years old and in command of his father’s cavalry, where he conducted himself bravely, taking an important leadership role.⁴³ Similarly, Alexander led the cavalry on the left flank at the battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C.E., serving under his father King Philip II when he was eighteen.⁴⁴ Other sources, moreover, report rumors that Scipio from an early age connected himself with Alexander, not only failing to deny such rumors, but also even

⁴² Polyb. 10.2

⁴³ *Ibid.* 10.3. Polybius records that Scipio was seventeen but Livy states that he was eighteen.

⁴⁴ Plut. *Alex.* 9.2

making efforts to strengthen them.⁴⁵ Indeed Scipio was one of the earlier Roman statesmen most closely associated with Alexander.⁴⁶

In this context, the final statement of this passage is worth discussing. In an attempt to display the caution and intelligence that Scipio had developed on the battlefield, Polybius states, “After this exploit [Scipio’s first battle] had won him a reputation for bravery, which all were bound to recognize, he was careful to refrain from exposing himself to danger when his country’s entire hopes rested upon his safety.”⁴⁷ Avoiding the dangers of leading from the front was not an uncommon phenomenon with Roman generals, who tended to lead their armies from behind the lines and did not normally fight hand-to-hand. A. D. Goldsworthy argues, “A commander who chose to fight throughout a battle automatically lost the ability to direct his reserves or indeed to issue any orders for the duration of the action. Given that reserves formed a high proportion of the total [Roman] army on most occasions, it was therefore rare for the Roman commander to lead from the front, after the manner of Alexander the Great.”⁴⁸ Although Goldsworthy describes the Roman military of the period directly following Polybius’ history, it would be difficult to argue that the Roman command structure and fighting procedures were entirely different from those of the Roman army of Polybius’

⁴⁵ See Livy 26.19.7, where he mentions rumors that Scipio, like Alexander, was a favorite of the gods and the son of Jupiter, who entered into coitus with his mother in the form of a large snake.

⁴⁶ Lucius Papirius Cursor was another early Roman who was commonly associated with Alexander, refer to the section on Cursor’s association with Alexander discussed later in this study. These connections are unique because directly connecting Roman statesmen to Alexander did not become popularized until Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus in the mid first century B.C.E.

⁴⁷ Polyb. 10.3

⁴⁸ Adrian K. Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC-AD 200* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 155. For a superb account of the responsibilities and decisions of a Roman commander on campaign, see *ibid.* 116-70.

period. This is not to imply that Roman commanders never fought among their soldiers. Similarly, it is not possible to prove that the majority of Roman generals of the mid-Republic led from the front. One must also understand that without leading from the front Roman generals were still subject to danger and death. Yet, in the case of Scipio, Polybius illustrated that he did his best to avoid such dangers.

Evidence suggests that Roman commanders were more inclined to lead either from the rear, (where the entire battle line could be viewed and the reserves could be positioned where they were most needed), or, close to but not on the front line, (where the commander still had the ability to control the placement of reserves but also was able to place himself at a critical position in the battle line).⁴⁹ Although it was rare, Roman commanders did fight in the front ranks, often when the situation necessitated the commander's physical presence, of which several examples are attested.⁵⁰ On the other hand, as Goldsworthy rightly mentions, Alexander was known universally for his bravery and daring in combat, fighting at the head of his men, sharing in the risks of battle.⁵¹ In

⁴⁹ Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 150-63.

⁵⁰ Many cases come from early Roman history, where arguably the Romans fought more like Greeks. A. M. Eckstein lists twenty-one Roman commanding generals killed in battle between 340-140 B.C.E. See Arthur M. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 317-18. For hand-to-hand combat and Roman commanders, see *ibid.* 197-200. Additionally, the battlefield deaths of Roman generals like Crassus (53 B.C.E.), Hirtius (43 B.C.E.), Pansa (43 B.C.E.), and even the much later deaths of emperors Decius (251 C.E.) and Julian (363 C.E.), just to name a few, show that Roman commanders did, at times, fight and die among their men.

⁵¹ For the uniqueness of Alexander's desire to fight among his men, see J. E. Lendon, *Soldiers & Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 136-37.

fact, he suffered several wounds over his military career and nearly died on more than one occasion.⁵²

The second half of Polybius' statement about Rome's hopes resting with Scipio's safety is an exaggeration when regarding Scipio. Although important to the Roman war effort, he did not carry the entire burden of Roman success or failure. Livy's account of Scipio's own speech to a mutinous group of Roman soldiers outside of New Carthage, Spain in 206 B.C.E. emphasizes this very point. Livy records Scipio, in an attempt to dissuade the soldiers from mutiny against their country, stating,

"I [Scipio] lay no stress upon my own name; I put it out of the question. Let it be supposed that I have not been injured by you in any respect beyond the ready credence of my death. What! If I were dead, was the state to expire with me? Was the empire of the Roman people to fall with me? Jupiter, most good and great, would not have permitted that the existence of the city, built under the auspices and sanction of the gods to last forever, should terminate with that of this frail and perishable body. The Roman people have survived those many and distinguished generals who were all cut off in one war; Flaminius, Paulus, Gracchus, Posthumius Albinus, Marcus Marcellus, Titus Quinctius Crispinus, Cneius Fulvius, my kinsmen the Scipios; and will survive a thousand others who may perish, some by the sword, others by disease; and would the Roman state have been buried with my single corpse?"⁵³

Livy here states that Scipio did not agree with the statement of Polybius that the fortune of Rome rested totally on his safety. The death of Scipio would not have doomed Rome. Yet, concerning Alexander, whose empire fractured immediately following his death, proving his indispensability, this is an example of what Polybius censures. Polybius disapproved a lack of caution in battle when the survival of the state was in jeopardy.

⁵² Alexander nearly died at the River Granicus in 334 B.C.E. and fighting against the Malli in the Punjab. For a discussion of Alexander's numerous wounds, see Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, 231, 266, 357, 382, 383, 420-23, and 477; and Paul Cartledge, *Alexander the Great: the Hunt for a New Past* (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2004), 185-88 and 209.

⁵³ Livy 28.28, translation by Cyrus Edmonds.

When Polybius adds that “such conduct is not the mark of a general who trusts to luck (τύχη) [i.e. Alexander and his successors], but of one who possesses intelligence [i.e. Scipio],” he sends a clear message.⁵⁴ We must emphasize that Polybius here refers to the luck of surviving in battle, not the luck of winning. In hand-to-hand combat, even a king could be killed. Polybius noted as much with his discussion of Ptolemy VI, who fell mortally wounded in battle.⁵⁵

Even though Polybius did not mention Alexander by name here, and may only have alluded to his actions, Alexander embodied these risky characteristics, and the potential connection should not be ignored. Scipio, whose career began much like Alexander’s, did not in the end foolishly risk his life in battle like the great Macedonian, or the Hellenistic kings who followed his example. At the least, this passage presents a Roman military virtue as superior to a Hellenic virtue.

If this passage does allude to Alexander, one should not view it as an overtly negative criticism. Admittedly, this section praises the caution of Scipio on the battlefield; but elsewhere in his history, Polybius admires battlefield courage and faults those who lacked such bravery.⁵⁶ The success of Alexander’s ability to command in the front ranks and his capability of leading his men to victory by sharing in their dangers was not lost on Polybius; he did praise Alexander’s accomplishments in his work and

⁵⁴ Polyb. 10.3

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 39.7.1.

⁵⁶ Polybius praised physical bravery on several occasions in men such as Philoemen and Philip V. In addition, Polybius’ main criticism of one of his heroes, Aratus of Sicyon, was his physical cowardice in battle. For both, see Arthur M. Eckstein, *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 21-23, 34-47, 55, 57-58, 149-50, 170n., 220, 239, and 243n.

indeed referred to him as superhuman.⁵⁷ In fact, the contrast makes the example even more interesting in that it further demonstrates the lengths to which Polybius went in order to represent the Romans as surpassing the actions of Alexander. This possible influence on Polybius' assessment of Alexander and its effect on his portrayal of Scipio is, to be fair, a matter of speculation; but it should not be overlooked, since the parallels between the young Scipio and Alexander are evident, because the passage champions Scipio's caution in battle over the dangerous practices of fighting in the front lines made famous by Alexander, and because it corresponds with the greater Polybian theme of establishing the achievements of the Romans as greater than the actions of Alexander the Great.

⁵⁷ Polyb. 12.23

Chapter II

The Argument for a Negative Polybian View of Alexander and Its Faults

In Richard Billows' article, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," he recognized the lack of scholarly work on Polybius' opinion of Alexander the Great.⁵⁸ His arguments deserve to be addressed in detail, since they are marked by some surprising shortcomings and oversights. He argues for the existence of "five basic themes concerning Alexander that interested Polybius."⁵⁹ According to Billows, those five themes are: Alexander's destruction of Thebes, how he is compared with other kings, his character and generalship, the achievements of the Macedonians under Alexander, and Alexander's military fortune passing to other generals.⁶⁰ Billows uses these five categories of analysis in an attempt to establish Polybius' resistance to and dislike of Alexander the Great. Billows pursued this line of argument by focusing on the passages found in Polybius' history where he interpreted Polybian criticisms of Alexander. Although Billows' argument does cover many important Alexander passages in Polybius' work, it fails to appreciate fully the laudatory statements addressed at the beginning of this study, namely passages 8.10, 12.23, and 3.59. Many of Billows' judgments on the evidence that he did discuss are misleading.

⁵⁸ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 286. For a concise, yet extensive study on Alexander scholarship, see Edward M. Anson, "Alexander the Great in Current Scholarship," *History Compass* 7, no. 3 (Online publication date: April, 2009): 981-92.

⁵⁹ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 289.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 289-90.

The negative Polybian view of Alexander that Billows' article advances does not reflect the sentiments of all Polybius' passages involving Alexander. Billows' argument often misconstrues the language or judgment of a passage in order to support his argument that Polybius had a negative outlook on Alexander. In reality, Polybius' opinion of Alexander is far more evenhanded, balancing between respect for his accomplishments and Polybius' agenda of representing the Romans as greater than Alexander. This is not to imply that Polybius failed to criticize Alexander, as seen in his description of Alexander's sack of the city of Thebes, discussed below. Polybius' handling of Alexander in his work is more nuanced than Billows credits. Polybius can criticize Alexander in particular points in his history without expressing a generally negative opinion of him. Polybius himself tells us that, in his estimation, the human personality is complex, stating, "So true it is that there is something multiform in the nature not only of men's bodies, but of their minds, so that not merely in pursuits of a different class the same man has a talent for some and none for others, but often in the case of such pursuits as are similar the same man may be most intelligent and most dull, or most audacious and most cowardly. Nor is this a paradox, but a fact familiar to careful observers."⁶¹ Polybius believed strongly that great men deserved both praise and blame.⁶² His general tone toward Alexander, with the exception of a few statements discussed below, is positive. Under additional scrutiny, the negative picture painted by Billows appears less convincing.

⁶¹ Polyb. 4.8.7-8

⁶² Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, 239.

Polybius' Criticism of Alexander over the Destruction of Thebes

Billows' strongest evidence for Polybian criticism of Alexander involves Polybius' discussion of the sack of the city of Thebes. In 38.2.14, Polybius refers to Alexander's sack of the city of Thebes as "unjust and terrible (ἀδίκᾳ καὶ δεινᾷ)." Polybius' criticism proves partially unjustified, conforming as it does to the conventional Greek resentment toward Alexander over the sack of Thebes, which was still present when Polybius wrote.⁶³ Ultimately, however, it is difficult to refute the negative view presented by Polybius in 38.2.13-4. However, it is also unnecessary. This one criticism of Alexander does not shape Polybius' entire opinion of him, which, as I have demonstrated, is mostly positive. The criticism of Alexander over Thebes, on its own, cannot support Billows' claim that Polybius harbored a collectively negative opinion of the great Macedonian.

Additionally, although Polybius condemned Alexander's sack of the city of Thebes, he does praise Alexander's piety and his sparing of the Theban temples in 5.8-11. This passage testifies to Polybius' undeniable appreciation of Alexander, as it praises his sparing of the holy structures at Thebes. Section 5.8-11 indeed establishes a positive view of Alexander and is given insufficient appreciation in Billows' article.

According to Polybius in this passage, Philip V had captured the Aetolian city of Thermus. In retaliation for the Aetolian destruction of the holy sites of Dium and Dodana, he looted and sacked the holy places of Thermus. Philip's actions horrify Polybius, who immediately highlights Alexander's correct treatment of Thebes and the Persians:

⁶³ For the Greek resentment of Alexander over the sack of Thebes, see Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, 151.

And take Alexander. Though so indignant with the Thebans that he razed the city to the ground, yet he was so far from neglecting the reverence due to the gods when he captured the city, that he took the most anxious care that not even any unintentional offense should be committed against the temples and holy places in general. Even when he crossed to Asia to chastise the Persians for the outrages they had perpetrated against the Greeks, he strove to exact the punishment from men that their deeds deserved, but refrained from injuring anything consecrated to the gods, although it was in this respect that the Persians had offended most while in Greece.⁶⁴

In this passage, Polybius praises Alexander's holiness and respect for sacred sites. In addition, Polybius's text characterizes Alexander as a righteous conqueror, punishing those who deserved punishment and sparing that which was sacred to the gods. Polybius voices complete agreement with this policy.

Polybius highly praises Alexander's piety in the face of the betrayal of the Thebans and the crimes of the Persians. The approval shown for Alexander by Polybius cannot be denied. The passage also represents Philip V as unworthy of his Macedonian predecessors for not following their examples in such a responsible manner:

With these examples constantly present to his mind Philip should now have shown himself to be the true heir and successor of those princes [Philip II, Alexander, and Antigonus III], not inheriting so much their kingdom as their high principles and magnanimity. But, instead of this, though all through his life he was at great pains to prove that he was allied in blood to Alexander and Philip, he was not in the least anxious to show himself their emulator. Therefore since his practices were the reverse of theirs, as he advanced in years his general reputation came to be also the reverse.⁶⁵

Thus, Philip V failed morally where Alexander triumphed. The laudatory tone of this passage toward Alexander is unmistakable. In 5.8-11, Polybius does not portray Alexander's sack of Thebes as an evil or cruel action like Philip V's sack of Thermus. To

⁶⁴ Polyb. 5.10.6-8

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 5.10.9-11.

be fair, Thermus was more of a collection of temple complexes than a traditional Greek polis. Therefore, the issue that Polybius here emphasizes is proper treatment of temples. Nevertheless, Polybius' favorable view of Alexander in this passage is undeniable. To exclude this passage when considering Polybius' general opinion of Alexander is unreasonable if one seeks an accurate appraisal of how Polybius collectively viewed him. Alexander's sparing of the Theban temples, in Polybius' opinion, was a redeeming aspect of Alexander's sack of Thebes. Even if Polybius had separated his judgments on Alexander's actions against the temples of Thebes and those against Thebes itself, eliminating any contradiction on his part, he still provides an opinion of Alexander's sack of Thebes that contains different degrees of criticism. We simply cannot view Polybius' judgment of Alexander's conduct in sacking Thebes as completely negative.

Polybius may have condemned Alexander's sack of the city of Thebes in 38.2.14. Yet, it is clear from this passage that Polybius considered Alexander a king of "high principles and magnanimity." He respected Alexander's responsible behavior and reverence for the temples of Thebes during the sack of the city. Hence, although Billows cites this passage, he does not give it the prominence that it deserves.⁶⁶ In addition, it calls attention to another reason for Polybius' respect for the actions of Alexander, his display of piety.

Contrary to Billows' opinion that Polybius did not portray Lyciscus as defending Alexander at 9.34, in fact Polybius does have Lyciscus defend Alexander's sacking of Thebes by stating that "when he [Alexander] believed himself to be wronged, he

⁶⁶ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 289-90.

punished Thebes (ἀδικεῖσθαι δόξας τὴν Θηβαίων πόλιν ἐκόλασε).”⁶⁷ Since he states that Alexander punished those who had wronged him, this does not represent Alexander as incorrect in his feelings. In addition, Lyciscus’ speech minimizes the negative act of sacking Thebes by listing the numerous benefits Alexander provided for Greece by his conquest of the Persians.⁶⁸ It is true that Lyciscus does not directly justify Alexander’s sack of Thebes. However, Polybius’ argument indicates that, in his own view, Alexander’s benefits to Greece far outweighed the punishment of Thebes. Polybius sympathized with the opinion of Lyciscus.

It is significant that Lyciscus’ speech follows that of Chlaeneas, who attacks the Macedonians for their oppression of Greece since Philip II.⁶⁹ It is also significant that Chlaeneas was an Aetolian, since the Aetolians were bitter rivals of Polybius’ Achaeans, and that Lyciscus defends Antigonos III, whom Aratus, a hero in Polybius’ work, supported. In fact, Chlaeneas’ speech advocates war against the Achaeans!⁷⁰ Additionally, it is important that Polybius chose to include Lyciscus’ defense of Alexander. These details point to Polybius’ own support of Lyciscus’ defense of Alexander against the attacks of Chlaeneas.⁷¹ Billows presents this passage in his article as only attacking Alexander’s “atrocious” against Thebes.⁷² This is misleading. As we have seen, the passage has a more complex message.

⁶⁷ Billows, “Polybius and Alexander Historiography,” 290; and Polyb. 9.34.1

⁶⁸ Polyb. 9.34.1-3

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 9.28-30.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 9.30.6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 9.36.1-7.

⁷² Billows, “Polybius and Alexander Historiography,” 290.

Finally, even if we take Billows' unfair example at face value, which we should not, Lyciscus' failure to justify Alexander's destruction of Thebes overtly in his speech, (although Lyciscus does argue that the benefits of Alexander's great accomplishments far outweighed his problems with the Greeks), does not confirm that Polybius conveys disapproval of Alexander's actions at Thebes in this passage.⁷³ In fact, as stated above, it could be more easily argued that since Polybius has Lyciscus speak against the Aetolians, whom Polybius did not support, since Chlaeneas advocated war against the Achaeans, since Lyciscus' speech came second as a rebuttal, since Lyciscus defended Antigonus, whom Aratus had supported, and since Lyciscus' speech was over twice as long as that of Chlaeneas, that Polybius wished to emphasize and sympathized with the argument that he placed in Lyciscus' mouth. In this scenario, Lyciscus is a creation of Polybius and he could characterize Lyciscus as he wished. Ultimately, the Spartans rejected Lyciscus' speech and followed the Aetolians and Romans into war with the Achaeans and Macedonians. Polybius' decision to assign Lyciscus a longer speech and the rebuttal becomes interesting and significant.

Thus, just like Polybius' overall opinion of Alexander, his account of Alexander's sack of Thebes is more nuanced than Billows admits. For Polybius, Alexander's actions against the town were cruel and terrible. However, as indicated by Lyciscus' speech and in opposition to Billows' opinion, Polybius knew that Alexander's actions against the Thebans could be defended since Thebes had wronged Alexander.⁷⁴ It is important that Polybius had someone defend this stance. In addition, Polybius praises Alexander's piety

⁷³ Polyb. 9.28, 31

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 9.28-39.

and reverence toward Thebes' holy places. Polybius' treatment of Alexander's actions against the town and the temples is not necessarily contradictory. In 4.8.7-8, Polybius notes that Alexander's actions were complex and warranted both blame and praise. Consequently, Billows exaggerates the general impact of the Theban sections on Polybius' general opinion of Alexander.

We cannot ignore either 38.2.13-4 or 5.10.6-7 when discussing Polybius' view on the sack of Thebes. Nor does either passage allow for a clear representation of Polybius' collective attitude toward Alexander on the issue of Thebes, let alone his general opinion of Alexander. Polybius' accounts of the sack of Thebes may not support the argument that Polybius was sympathetic to Alexander's actions, since 38.2.14 makes clear that he was not. Yet, Polybius was not critical of Alexander's feelings of betrayal toward Thebes; through Lyciscus' speech, he implies that some thought Alexander's actions defensible. Ultimately, Polybius praised Alexander's restraint in saving the Theban temples but faulted Alexander's lack of restraint in sacking the city. Billows' pronouncement that "for Polybius, Alexander's treatment of Thebes was simply an unjustifiable atrocity" is too simplistic.⁷⁵ We have shown the issue to be more complicated. Polybius thought the sack of the city was cruel. At the same time, though, he thought that the sparing of the temples was admirable behavior, something that Billows does not fully appreciate. The important observation to conclude from the Polybian discussions of Alexander's sack of Thebes is that they do not establish Polybius' overall view of Alexander as negative. Rather, they confirm that Polybius continued to be generally respectful of Alexander's actions and accomplishments.

⁷⁵ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 290.

Polybius' Comparison of Alexander with Other Kings

Billows' second theme is that of Polybius' comparison between Alexander and other kings. Again, he cites four examples in an attempt to display a negative Polybian opinion of Alexander, stating that "of the four comparisons he [Polybius] draws, the contemporary kings come out ahead in two, and Alexander in the other two."⁷⁶ Billows emphasizes that Polybius differs from the majority of other ancient historians who treat Alexander because "the standard adulatory view of Alexander placed him far above contemporary rulers."⁷⁷ Billows is correct to argue that Alexander was often lauded above contemporary rulers. However, he is wrong in inferring that Polybius does not also share this view. As observed earlier in this study, where Billows' assertions would have been correct is in characterizing Polybius' accounts comparing the Romans to Alexander, since Polybius does consistently represent the Romans as superior to the great Macedonian.

Firstly, Billows gives an incorrect reference for one of his examples. He states that Polybius compares Philip V unfavorably with Alexander in 38.2.13-4, when in fact this is one of Polybius' discussions of Alexander's sack of Thebes and in no way mentions Philip V. What Billows meant to cite was passage 18.3.2-5. Let us now turn to this passage.

In the two pro-Alexander passages that Billows intended to cite (5.10.6-9, 18.3), Polybius yet again voices adulation for Alexander's abilities. The other two passages cited by Billows require closer inspection. His first example, (4.23.9), treats the sack of Thebes, a topic addressed above. To be sure, Polybius favored sparing the Spartans in

⁷⁶ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 291.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

220 B.C.E. because their marginal crimes did not merit the punishment of destruction. The situation of Sparta, moreover, did not parallel that of Thebes in 335 B.C.E. Yet, we should not consequently infer from this passage that Polybius favored Philip V's "merciful treatment" over "the merciless treatment of Thebes by Alexander" as Billows puts it.⁷⁸ Polybius' text itself does not make this moralizing judgment. In fact, it limits the amount of praise due to Philip for his decision to spare Sparta because Polybius argued that this judgment was unlikely to have been his own.⁷⁹ Even if we can detect an implicit criticism of Alexander here, in an unfavorable comparison with Philip in this section, then Billows provides only one indecisive example to support this argument (out of four). Additionally, this example comes from his analysis of Alexander's treatment of Thebes, which he already discussed. Therefore, it adds little more to his hypothesis.

Billows' other example, 5.55.9-10, involves Polybius supposedly representing Antiochus III favorably at the expense of Alexander for allegedly conquering Media Atropatene. Billows contends that Polybius believed Alexander failed to do this, thereby "at least implying comparison favorable to Antiochus."⁸⁰ Certainly, Polybius had a purpose in mentioning Alexander next to Antiochus. Nevertheless, the idea that Polybius somehow characterizes Antiochus as surpassing Alexander in prestige is ill founded, as Polybius describes the weakness of Media Atropatene.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 291.

⁷⁹ Polyb. 4.24.1-3

⁸⁰ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 291.

⁸¹ Polyb. 5.55.9-10

Antiochus never “conquered” Media Atropatene, as Billows suggests; rather, he brought it under his hegemony without bloodshed and without difficulty.⁸² In this passage, Polybius’ point is not to argue that Alexander could not have accomplished this task where Antiochus did, as Billows argues; instead, he maintains that Alexander ignored this insignificant region and Antiochus did not. Billows attempts to make far too much of this passage. Alexander did not *fail* to conquer Media Atropatene, as Billows puts it, nor is Polybius implying as much in this section. Alexander never even made the attempt. Billow’s second theme, unlike the first, does more to promote Polybius’ respect for Alexander than it does to challenge it.

The Character and Generalship of Alexander

Billows’ third theme concerns Polybius’ opinion of Alexander’s character and generalship. He also presents this topic by giving four examples (5.10.6-9, 12.17-22, 12.23, and 16.22a.5). The first three examples again are laudatory statements, where Polybius praises Alexander’s religious reverence, defends his command ability, and emphasizes his superhuman character. Billows only mentions this evidence, which is contradictory to his argument of Polybius’ negative view of Alexander, in passing. His article then concentrates solely on the final example, involving the Gazans’ resistance to the Persians, Alexander, and Antiochus III.⁸³ Billows’ argument, even by his own acknowledgement, is only an interpretation of the possible implications of the text.⁸⁴

⁸² Polyb. 5.55 and Strabo 11.13.1-2

⁸³ Billows, “Polybius and Alexander Historiography,” 291-2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 292.

In attempting to produce a series of Polybian criticisms of Alexander, Billows' work focuses on the use of three words in the passage: safety (σωτηρία), impulse (ὄρμη), and force (βία).⁸⁵ Billows views Alexander as the destroyer of *soteria*, the harbinger of *bia*, and a man endowed with animal *horme*. We must emphasize again that this is Billows' interpretation of the passage, not one suggested directly by Polybius. Billows' argument may make some worthwhile observations, because Polybius does praise the Gazans and mention the enslavement of Tyre. Still, Billows' overall argument is weak; in addition, he exaggerates its significance for the meaning of the passage and for Polybius' general view of Alexander.

It is important to note that a Persian and Arab force garrisoned Gaza. One can therefore argue that Gaza's resistance to Alexander was more the decision of the Persian garrison than of the local population.⁸⁶ However, Polybius' failure to mention the Persian occupying force in Gaza, choosing instead to emphasize the determination of the Gazans alone, again illustrates his difference in attitude toward Alexander from the more traditional "Alexander historians." His emphasis on the Gazans making efforts to defend their freedom from Alexander, as opposed to a Persian garrison defending Gaza from Alexander, demonstrates that Polybius intended Alexander's actions to be interpreted differently from our other sources. Polybius admired cities that resisted the aggression of kings. Polybius' approval of the resistance of the city of Abydus to Philip V is another example of this theme.⁸⁷ At 16.22a.4-6, Polybius champions the actions of the Gazans

⁸⁵ Polyb. 16.22a.4-6

⁸⁶ Arrian tells us that the Governor Batis had a mercenary force of Arabs. Arr. *Anab.* 2.26; and Curtius Rufus records that 10,000 Persians and Arabs were killed in the siege. Curt. 4.6.30

⁸⁷ Polyb. 16.30-4

over the advances of Persia, Alexander, and Antiochus III. Yet, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the passage does not focus on the actions of Alexander and that Billows' arguments go too far.

Billows' article offers an interesting perspective on the passage. Perhaps if this passage was the only evidence we had left from Polybius' commentary on Alexander there might be more reason to accept Billows' perspective. Yet, the passage cannot bear the weight placed on it by Billows. Most of what Polybius says about Alexander is positive and hence contradicts this hypothesis. In fact, Billows himself acknowledges that the majority of the examples he cites in this third theme give a positive impression of Alexander, and the one possible exception that he champions is an interpretation relying on a reading of the text that cannot be *proved* to be correct. It is perfectly reasonable and appropriate to take this passage at face value as a military description. It is true that Polybius represents Alexander as aggressive and as the enslaver of those who resist him. Nevertheless, this passage more likely expresses a moral judgment passed by Polybius on the correct way for small states to face the forceful pressures of stronger states, than it does a deliberate attack on Alexander.

In spite of this, Billows' work equates Polybius' praise of the Gazans with direct criticism of Alexander.⁸⁸ He then proceeds to assume that Polybius, in fact, agreed with Hegesias of Magnesia that this was another instance of ruthless and cruel conduct by Alexander.⁸⁹ Thus, for Billows, Polybius characterized Alexander in this passage as the opposite of the Stoic ideal of a king and, in an indirect way, passed negative judgment

⁸⁸ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 293.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

upon Alexander by praising the Gazans who resisted him in defense of their autonomy. As we have seen previously, Polybius' text demonstrates that he was more than capable of openly alerting his reader when he condemned the actions of Alexander.⁹⁰ Such open expression of negative opinion is also apparent in his commentary on Philip V, Antiochus III, the various Roman sycophants of the Greek world, and even the Romans themselves. With such a propensity toward openly voicing his own opinion throughout his history, why Polybius suddenly would choose this passage to mask his hidden opinion of Alexander as the negative of Stoic ideals further undercuts Billows' argument. Polybius saw Alexander behaving aggressively in this instance. One should not disregard his praise of the Gazans' resistance. Nevertheless, this passage is not a direct attack on Alexander. Billows' argument, while it has a point, is speculative.

Billows finishes his discussion by stating his personal opinion, "I venture to suggest therefore that Polybius does here, in praising the Gazans' resistance to Alexander, depict Alexander in critical terms borrowed from the Stoic treatise on ideal kingship."⁹¹ Billows' suggestion no doubt appeals to those who wish to see Alexander painted in an unattractive light.⁹² However, since it is Billows' own admitted interpretation, unsupported by dependable evidence, and contradicted by the frequency with which Polybius portrays Alexander positively, it does little to further the credibility of his hypothesis that Polybius' depiction of Alexander is primarily negative.

⁹⁰ Polyb. 38.2

⁹¹ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 293.

⁹² For the recent popularity in modern scholarship to portray Alexander in a negative light and the problems associated with this trend, see Anson, "Alexander the Great in Current Scholarship," 981-6.

Those Deemed as Praiseworthy for Greatness

Billows' fourth theme concerns "the allocation of credit for the achievements of the Macedonians under Alexander's leadership."⁹³ He is correct to point out that most of the "Alexander historians" have a tendency to place most, if not full credit for Macedonian success in the East with Alexander.⁹⁴ For Billows, "Polybius did not share that view."⁹⁵ He offers two passages (3.6.4-14, 22.18.10) to illustrate that Alexander merely made use of the preparations of his father, Philip II, to invade Persia. However, Billows' assessment that, in Polybius' opinion, Philip did *all* the preparation and planning, "while Alexander merely put Philip's plans into effect," is an exaggeration of what the text actually states.⁹⁶ At 3.6.5, in an attempt to show that Alexander's invasion did not cause the war with Persia, Polybius refers to "plans and preparations for which, in the case of the Persian war, had been made earlier, *many* (πολλά) by Alexander and even *some* (ὀλίγα) by Philip during his life." Certainly, Polybius is not guilty of giving *all* the credit to Alexander, nor should he have done so. However, he still gives more credit to Alexander than to Philip, contrary to Billows' assertions.

At 22.18.10, Polybius, in an attempt to equate the military situation of King Perseus with that of Alexander, states that "Philip [II], son of Amyntas, conceived and meant to carry out the war against Persia, but it was Alexander who put his decision into execution." This passage again does not support Billows' claim that Polybius had a negative opinion of Alexander. Here Polybius' text makes no mention of physical

⁹³ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 293.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 293.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 293-4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 294.

planning or preparation, emphasizing only Philip II's words and Alexander's actions. In fact, Polybius stresses that although Philip meant to carry out the war, Alexander actually executed it. Alexander ultimately capitalized on the idea and wish of his father, unlike Hannibal or Perseus, who failed in their attempts to carry out their fathers' alleged conceptions. To be fair, Philip II was murdered and therefore could not invade Persia. All the same, this passage accords much praise and glory to Alexander.

Billows' third example is 8.10.7-11. We discussed this passage previously in this study. Billows' article does not deny the laudatory and respectful tone displayed by Polybius. Instead, it focuses on Polybius' attempt to share credit between Alexander and his subordinates. Again, though, Billows' wording is misleading. Billows ignores the level of credit offered to Alexander by Polybius. Billows states, "In sum, for Polybius only a share of the credit for the Macedonian conquests belongs to Alexander, *a greater share* belonging to his generals and advisers."⁹⁷ Polybius assigned a large (μεγάλην) share to Alexander and no less (οὐκ ἐλάττω) to his companions and therefore *an equal* level of credit to Alexander and his subordinates, not a greater share to one or the other. Billows' own translation of the passage is: "no less credit."⁹⁸ No less does not mean greater.

In an attempt to attribute a negative opinion of Alexander to Polybius in 8.10.8-9, Billows continues, "Alexander's youth and inexperience are emphasized, as opposed to the extensive experience of his chief underlings while serving his father."⁹⁹ Polybius does

⁹⁷ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 294. (The italics are mine.)

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

refer to Alexander's youth, stating, "although he was young (καίπερ ὄντι νέω)."¹⁰⁰ However, one should not view this as a negative. In addition, this section nowhere mentions Alexander's "inexperience."¹⁰¹ On the other hand, Polybius simply asserts that we should "give no less credit to his [Alexander's] helpers and friends."¹⁰² Polybius greatly praises Alexander's companions but he does not mention their infinite wisdom and greater experience. The portrait of a young, ignorant Alexander deserving less credit than his subordinates of masterful quality and ability is a creation of Billows, not of Polybius. Polybius' praise of the deserving subordinates of Alexander is more extensive than in what we find in many of the surviving "Alexander historians," but not to the extent that Billows argues.

Billows concludes his argument by stating, that "the view of the correct apportioning of credit for Macedonian successes espoused here by Polybius is far more plausible than the Alexandro-centric view offered by the 'Alexander historians' and uncritically endorsed by Tarn."¹⁰³ Perhaps, but this issue is more complicated than Billows suggests. Polybius wanted Alexander and the companions to share credit for good reason, but Billows exaggerates what Polybius says here.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Polyb. 8.10.8

¹⁰¹ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 294.

¹⁰² Polyb. 8.10.8

¹⁰³ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 295.

¹⁰⁴ In fact, the failures of Philip V, Antiochus III, and Perseus against Rome only emphasize further the importance of competent subordinates. Polybius' description of Philip V's defeat at Cynoscephalae in particular demonstrates the emphasis that Polybius placed on the need for competent subordinates and the superior military abilities of Alexander to those of his successors. Clearly, Polybius understood that the greatest asset of a general was a good supporting class of officers. He saw that Alexander benefitted equally from one of the greatest officer corps of all time. Yet, he also understood that Alexander's great success was due to his own personal ability.

Did Polybius Believe that Alexander Owed Everything to Luck? Would that Matter?

Billows' final theme involves Polybius' opinion of Alexander's fortune. As an example, he cites Demetrius of Phalerum's discussion of Fortune, as recorded by Polybius.¹⁰⁵ Billows claims, "The clear implication of Polybius' presentation of Demetrius' views is that Alexander's success was due primarily to the favour of Fortune."¹⁰⁶ This statement does not hold up to close examination as well when we scrutinize the passage thoroughly. Polybius quotes the relevant portion of Demetrius' views as follows:

"For if you consider not countless years or many generations, but only these fifty years before us, you will read in them the cruelty of Fortune. I ask you, do you think that fifty years ago either the Persians and the Persian king or the Macedonians and the king of Macedon, if some god had foretold the future to them, would ever have believed that at the time when we live, the very name of the Persians would have perished utterly — the Persians who were masters of almost the whole world — and that the Macedonians, whose name was formerly almost unknown, would now be the lords of it all? But nevertheless this Fortune, who never makes a compact with life, and who always defeats our reckoning by some novel stroke. She who ever demonstrates her power by foiling our expectations, now also, as it seems to me, makes it clear to all men, by endowing the Macedonians with the whole wealth of Persia, that she has but lent them these blessings until she decides to deal differently with them." [Polybius continues] And this now happened in the time of Perseus.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Polyb. 29.21.1-7

¹⁰⁶ Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 295.

¹⁰⁷ Polyb. 29.21.3-7

This discussion about the influence of Fortune on the Persians and Macedonians is less than clear and does not even explicitly mention Alexander.¹⁰⁸ The “king of Macedon” referred to above is likely his father, Philip II.¹⁰⁹

What we must consider also is that the complete passage undeniably concerns King Perseus and his fall from power. The connection of Fortune to Perseus is a more pressing issue in this discussion than any commentary on Alexander. In any case, the passage refers to the Fortune of all of Macedon, not just of Alexander. We must therefore at least conclude that Polybius’ use of the passage shows that he believed that all of Macedon’s successes and failures were connected to Fortune. To focus only on Alexander here would be inappropriate. What is more, one cannot warrant Billows’ assumption that this statement is evidence for a “clear” Polybian connection between Alexander’s success and Fortune. There is no way to prove that this is Polybius’ clear purpose in including the Demetrius passage, especially since the passage obviously describes the Macedonians as a whole and is concerned with Perseus’ fall, not primarily

¹⁰⁸ Who is “the king of Macedon” referred to above? Because of the emphasis on the former obscurity of Macedon, it easily could be Philip II, who after all created a dominant Macedonian state in Greece and began the plans to invade the East. In fact, if we take into account Livy’s similar description of this rise and fall of Macedon, then we can again see that Demetrius probably intended Philip II. See Livy 45.9; Walbank argues that the king referred to in this passage is Amyntas III. However, the fifty year period does not necessarily have to begin with Darius’ death, as Walbank indicates, nor does it have to coordinate with the King’s Peace. See Walbank, *Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Vol. 3, 394. Also, see Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.29-35; and Diod. 24.110

¹⁰⁹ Demetrius was a contemporary of Philip and Alexander (c. 350-282 B.C.E.), meaning Walbank’s 330 B.C.E. date is possible. Yet the time when Demetrius was writing is crucial. Cicero tells us at *Fin.* 19.54 that it was during his exile in Egypt after 297 B.C.E. that Demetrius composed his works. If Demetrius referred to the fifty years before the time that he was writing, then 380 B.C.E. is too far back in the past to consider. The Persians, under the leadership of Artaxerxes III, known as the Great Shah, were still “masters of almost the whole world,” especially after Artaxerxes’ defeat of Nectanebo II and his reconquest of Egypt in 343 B.C.E. See Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002), 386-89. Thus, Demetrius’ statement, “for if you consider not countless years or many generations, but only these fifty years before us,” would begin his discussion most likely in the reign of Philip II (359-336 B.C.E.), presumably not in that of Amyntas III, as Walbank suggested, and certainly not in that of Alexander.

Alexander. In addition, a connection between Alexander and Fortune would not necessarily carry a negative connotation, serving as evidence that Polybius held a negative view of Alexander.

The connection of Alexander with Fortune is a common motif in ancient writing, and although Billows might have justification for including Polybius among the writers who depict Alexander in this way, the passage about Demetrius does not qualify as adequate evidence.¹¹⁰ It does not refer directly to Alexander and is concerned principally with Macedon's fall from power under Philip V and Perseus. However, Alexander's linkage to Fortune would not have lessened the respect and admiration felt by the ancients for the Macedonian and his accomplishments. S. P. Oakley points out that for a person living in the ancient world to say that Fortune favored someone was a great compliment.¹¹¹ We must emphasize that Polybius was not necessarily different from other ancient writers. Associating Alexander with Fortune does not have to carry a negative implication.

Connections made between Alexander's personal success and the blessings bestowed on him by fortune might change from author to author, situation to situation. However, even if Billows' account claims that "it is clear [for Polybius] that he [Alexander] benefited from a *very great deal* of plain old good luck," he does not offer much support for this claim.¹¹² His argument is unconvincing and does not establish Polybius' view of Alexander as negative.

¹¹⁰ For the most extensive ancient example still extant of connecting Alexander with Fortune, see Plutarch, *On the Fortune of Alexander*.

¹¹¹ Oakley, *Commentary III*, 199.

¹¹² Billows, "Polybius and Alexander Historiography," 295.

Polybius Compares Alexander Favorably to Other Dominant Figures in His Work

An additional section of Polybius' work that Billows does not emphasize is worth addressing: his account of the causes and beginning of Alexander's war with Persia. As discussed previously, Polybius argues that past events involving Persia had a strong impact on the actions of Alexander. Former Greek military successes alerted Philip II to the opportunity awaiting the Macedonians in the Persian Empire.¹¹³ For Polybius, Philip II and Alexander used Persia's invasions of Greece in 490 and 480 B.C.E. as a suitable pretext for war.¹¹⁴ It is interesting to note that Polybius does not brand Alexander as the aggressor against Persia. Admittedly, Polybius was not primarily dispensing moral judgments in this section. Rather, he was analytically discussing causation of wars for the benefit of future historians. Failing to blame Alexander for the war with Persia is not the same thing as praise of Alexander by Polybius. Still, it is significant that when given the opportunity to criticize Alexander on his reasons for invading Persia, Polybius did not decide to do so. Conversely, he did criticize Hannibal's actions in the Second Punic War, Antiochus' actions in the Syrian War, and later, Perseus' actions in the Third Macedonian War.¹¹⁵ These statements elsewhere further underline that Polybius is not criticizing Alexander here. Such evidence refutes Billow's assertion that Polybius had a thoroughly negative opinion of Alexander. This section of Polybius' work warrants discussion in this context because it furnishes another example establishing Polybius' lack of hostility toward Alexander. Instead of noting Alexander's ambition for glory, desire for

¹¹³ Polyb. 3.6

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ See *Ibid.* 3.6-10, 22.18.10, 28.9-10, and 29.17-19.1

bloodshed, want of fortune, or unstoppable aggression as the causes for war, Polybius adopts the pro-Macedonian reasoning to justify the invasion, namely the violent actions of Persia against Greece. It is necessary to address the passage closely, focusing on where Polybius records his thoughts on the causes, pretexts, and beginnings of wars:

Some of those authors who have dealt with Hannibal and his times, wishing to indicate the causes that led to the above war between Rome and Carthage [the Second Punic War], allege as its first cause the siege of Saguntum by the Carthaginians and as its second their crossing, contrary to treaty, the river whose native name is the Iber [the modern day Ebro]. I should agree in stating that these were the *beginnings* of the war, *but I can by no means allow that they were its causes, unless we call Alexander's crossing to Asia the cause of his war against Persia and Antiochus' landing at Demetrias the cause of his war against Rome, neither of which assertions is either reasonable or true.*¹¹⁶

Here Polybius indicates that he did not feel that Alexander's invasion of Persia was the cause of the war. Polybius continues:

*For who could consider these to be causes of wars, plans and preparations for which, in the case of the Persian war, had been made earlier, many by Alexander and even some by Philip during his life, and in the case of the war against Rome by the Aetolians long before Antiochus arrived? These are pronouncements of men [i.e. the historians that Polybius is scolding] who are unable to see the great and essential distinction between a beginning and a cause or purpose, these being the first origin of all, and the beginning coming last. By the beginning of something I mean the first attempt to execute and put in action plans on which we have decided, by its causes what is most initiatory in our judgments and opinions.*¹¹⁷

Polybius' argument thus demonstrates the general short sightedness and confusion of other historians in their discussions of the beginnings and causes of wars. Polybius desired to make clear that every conflict has a cause, pretext, and beginning, in that order.

In his deliberations on Alexander's war with Persia, Polybius states:

¹¹⁶ Polyb. 3.6 (The italics are mine.)

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* (The italics are mine.)

The nature of these [the cause, pretext, and beginning] is evident from the instances adduced above; it is easy for anyone to see the real causes and origin of the war against Persia. The first [cause] was the retreat of the Greeks under Xenophon from the upper Satrapies, in which, though they traversed the whole of Asia, a hostile country, none of the barbarians ventured to face them. The second [cause] was the crossing of Agesilaus, King of Sparta, to Asia, where he found no opposition of any moment to his projects, and was only compelled to return without effecting anything owing to the disturbances in Greece. *From both of these facts Philip perceived and reckoned on the cowardice and indolence of the Persians as compared with the military efficiency of himself and his Macedonians, and further fixing his eyes on the splendor of the great prize which the war promised, he lost no time, once he had secured the avowed good-will of the Greeks, but seizing on the pretext that it was his urgent duty to take vengeance on the Persians for their injurious treatment of the Greeks, he bestirred himself and decided to go to war, beginning to make every preparation for this purpose.*¹¹⁸

Philip II recognized the successes of Xenophon and Agesilaus as attractive causes for war. These military actions had left Persia in a diminished state of perceived power and diminished the “uncertainty principle” restricting Macedonian action against Persia.¹¹⁹ The conquests of Philip had increased the power of Macedon and numerous internal conflicts had weakened the Persian Empire.¹²⁰ Thus, a “power transition crisis” had emerged.¹²¹ In political-science terminology, what was once a system of unipolarity under Persia, i.e. an international system where hegemony is dominated by one superpower, was now replaced by a system of bi-polarity, i.e. the shared dominance of

¹¹⁸ Polyb. 3.6 (The italics are mine.)

¹¹⁹ (Roughly defined) The “uncertainty principle” involves the opaque awareness of states to one another and their various capabilities or deficiencies. A state can only discover actual power through conflict. See Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 17.

¹²⁰ Philip added much of the Balkans, Illyria, and Greece to the Kingdom of Macedon, greatly increasing his power. Meanwhile, the internal conflicts weakening Persia were devastating, namely the numerous civil wars from 424 B.C.E. to 336 B.C.E. under Darius II, Artaxerxes II, III, and IV, and Darius III and the recent rebellion of Egypt.

¹²¹ (Roughly defined) A “power transition crisis” is a sudden, large fluctuation in power relations within a system of multi or bi-polarity, significantly increasing the possibility of conflict. See Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 24.

hegemony by two rival powers, between Persia and Macedon.¹²² Philip saw an opportunity to wage a “hegemonic war” against Persia to establish Macedon as the new leader of a system of unipolarity.¹²³ With his causes established, Philip desired a justified pretext for war. This came in the form of the Greeks’ desire to avenge the invasions of 490 and 480 B.C.E. by the Persians.¹²⁴

Polybius concludes, “We must therefore look on the first considerations I have mentioned [i.e. the actions of Xenophon and Agesilaus] as the causes of the war against Persia, the second [avenging the Persian invasions of Greece] as its pretext, and *Alexander's crossing to Asia as its beginning.*”¹²⁵ Ultimately, Philip was the cause of the war and Alexander was the instrument through which the war began. Whatever judgment Polybius’ argument makes here, it does not view Alexander negatively. In fact, Polybius’ lack of criticism of Alexander when compared to the extent to which he criticized Hannibal, Antiochus, and Perseus is significant.

We must mention again that Polybius’ text attempts to teach future historians a lesson in the proper manner by which to determine causation more than it passes moral judgments. However, Polybius’ lack of hostility toward the actions of Philip and Alexander is apparent. If Polybius had a generally negative attitude toward Alexander, as Billows argues, then it seems likely that Polybius would have voiced this negative opinion in this part of his history. Polybius could have characterized Alexander as a cruel

¹²² Note Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 23.

¹²³ For a succinct account of realist theory and its application to the ancient world, see *ibid.* 2, 12-29, 30-31, 33, 35-36, 67-68, 72, 76-78, 195, 258, 260-62, 282, 308, and 315.

¹²⁴ For Polybius’ thoughts on causation, note A. M. Eckstein, “Hannibal at New Carthage: Polybius 3.15 and the Power of Irrationality,” *Classical Philology* 84, No. 1 (January 1989): 1-15.

¹²⁵ Polyb. 3.6

aggressor. Although this section of Polybius' text is more analytical than moralizing, the noticeable distinction made by Polybius between the example of Philip and Alexander and the example of Hamilcar and Hannibal is important.¹²⁶ Polybius portrays Hannibal's war against Rome as based first on his anger.¹²⁷ Furthermore, Polybius juxtaposes the hot emotion fueling the Hannibalic War against the cool reasoning behind Alexander's expedition.¹²⁸ He then describes Hannibal as the vessel and continuation of his father's hatred.¹²⁹ In 3.15, Polybius also represents Hannibal as the model of a bad statesman.¹³⁰ Finally, Polybius describes Hannibal, who in his opinion had a justifiable pretext for war against Rome in the illegal confiscation of Sardinia by the Romans, as "in a mood of unreasoning and violent anger," and as "obsessed by passion" after failing to advance this justified point.¹³¹ Polybius' opinion implies that Hannibal lost all moral superiority in the conflict by creating a false pretext for war with Rome over Saguntum. Polybius states that Hannibal appeared to be "embarking on the war not only in defiance of reason but even of justice."¹³²

Polybius' discussion of the causes and pretext of Hannibal's war with Rome stands in contrast to what he recorded about Alexander's war with Persia. It would be short sided to interpret it as merely factual analysis on the part of Polybius, devoid of any

¹²⁶ Polyb. 3.7

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 3.9. Also, note Eckstein, "Hannibal at New Carthage," 8.

¹²⁸ Eckstein, "Hannibal at New Carthage," 5.

¹²⁹ Polyb. 3.12

¹³⁰ Eckstein, "Hannibal at New Carthage," 2.

¹³¹ Polyb. 3.15 Also, see Eckstein, "Hannibal at New Carthage," 9.

¹³² Polyb. 3.15

deeper meaning. The negative moral judgments passed by Polybius on Hannibal, and the lack thereof passed on Alexander, should not be dismissed as inconsequential. Nor should we overlook Polybius' intentional pairing of Alexander's correctly executed war with the wars incorrectly executed by Hannibal and Antiochus III.

Although Polybius faults Antiochus III for waging war because of the misguided anger of the Aetolians, and Hannibal for prematurely launching the Second Punic War through hatred and foolishness, Polybius does not criticize Alexander's resolution to invade Persia.¹³³ He also praises Alexander's success.¹³⁴ Additionally, Polybius here embraces the pro-Macedonian justification for war and appears unwilling to disparage Alexander for committing a war out of personal ambition, greed, or aggression. Although Polybius pairs Alexander's success with Hannibal's and Antiochus' failures, this passage should not be taken as strong praise for Alexander. Yet, it still qualifies as further evidence disproving Billows' argument that Polybius considered Alexander in mostly negative terms.

Final Thoughts on the Shortcomings of the Claim that Polybius Viewed Alexander Negatively

Billows' article raises some interesting points about Polybius' assessments of Alexander. Nevertheless, his methods and conclusions too often misrepresent Polybius' text. Billows does succeed in showing that Polybius wrote about Alexander in a different way from that adopted by the more traditional sources, the "Alexander historians."

¹³³ Polyb. 3.6, 15. Also, note Eckstein, "Hannibal at New Carthage," 2, 6, 9, and 11.

¹³⁴ See Polyb. 3.59, 8.10, and 12.23

Billows is also correct to point out that the apologetic tone found in many of the “Alexander historians” is mostly, if not completely, missing from Polybius’ work. However, where Billows’ argument ultimately fails is in its efforts to prove that Polybius was hostile to Alexander. Other than Polybius’ discussions of Alexander’s sacking of the city of Thebes, the text does not validate this claim. In addition, Polybius’ passages on Thebes are more nuanced than Billows contends, and they are insufficient evidence for determining Polybius’ general opinion toward Alexander.

Billows’ article does not pay enough attention to evidence contradictory to his arguments. Nor does he sufficiently consider Polybius’ respect for Alexander the Great.¹³⁵ Billows does bring more attention to Alexander’s impact on Polybius.¹³⁶ Yet, he also reaches conclusions by exaggerating some of Polybius’ views. Billows does not discuss the topic in adequate detail. It is a goal of this present study to do what Billows did not manage to accomplish, by looking at evidence that he neglected or misconstrued.

There can be no denying that Polybius respected the accomplishments and abilities of Alexander. It is also clear that Polybius did not refuse to criticize Alexander when he felt that it was necessary. In comparing what Polybius says about the Romans to what he says about Alexander, we see that Polybius made certain criticisms of the Macedonian king. However, offering criticism did not render Polybius’ collective opinion of Alexander as negative, despite Billows’ argument. What is important to remember is that these criticisms do not challenge the greatness of Alexander; instead they serve the

¹³⁵ See especially Polyb. 8.10, 12.23, and 3.59

¹³⁶ Billows, “Polybius and Alexander Historiography,” 286.

purpose of portraying Alexander and his accomplishments as more human, and therefore, more humanly obtainable. Ultimately, Polybius saw Rome as the true successor and rival of Alexander. Polybius believed that Alexander was indeed great; however, he portrays the Romans as greater.

Chapter III

How Roman Arms Came to Conquer the Successors of Alexander

Now it is time to turn to a final passage by Polybius, Polybius' digression on the Macedonian phalanx immediately following his account of the Roman victory at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C.E. and his arguments about its shortcomings when compared to the Roman manipular legion. Polybius' effort to portray Roman accomplishments as superior to Macedonian accomplishments, noted previously in the passages about Polybius' discussion of the scope of Roman conquest and Polybius' opinion of Scipio's caution in battle, will be further analyzed in this section. This passage also attests to the influence of the reputation of Alexander on Polybius' writings. It warrants emphasis, however, that Polybius here discusses the Macedonians of the late third and early second centuries B.C.E., not those of Alexander's period per se.

In this account, Polybius asserts that the Greeks of his period had not disassociated the successes and methods of Philip II's and Alexander's Macedonian phalanx armies from those of Philip V, Antiochus III, and Perseus. This is even though the tactics, formations, and composition of the Macedonian army had changed over the one hundred to one hundred fifty years since Alexander's death, sometimes drastically to

its severe detriment.¹³⁷ Polybius' digression illustrates that he did not make this connection. Polybius saw the Macedonian armies of his period as nearly identical to those of Philip II and Alexander.¹³⁸ For this reason, he offered misleading arguments, only a few of which we will discuss, since they are not the focus of this study. Yet, Polybius' implied association of Alexander's reputation with that of the Macedonian armies, which the Romans defeated, enabled him to strengthen his theme of Roman superiority to the great king.

The high reputation of the military might of the Macedonian phalanx, which Philip II and Alexander built, still was associated with the Macedonian armies of Polybius' period. Relating Alexander to his successors would not have been difficult for Polybius' audience. Clearly, Greeks of Polybius' time, like Polybius himself, were likely to have identified the Macedonian phalanx of the mid-second century B.C.E. with that of the late-fourth century B.C.E. Such identification would have helped to provoke general Greek shock at Rome's domination of Macedon, as described by Polybius at the end of his digression.¹³⁹ By asserting the superiority of the Roman army over the army built by Philip II and taken to the ends of the earth by Alexander, Polybius established his theme that Roman greatness surpassed that of Alexander. Polybius did not take this theme to the

¹³⁷ For the original flexibility and depth of the Macedonian phalanx, note Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, 68 and 73. For the changes to the phalanx by Polybius' period, see Polyb. 12.19.6, 18.30.1, and 2.66.9; Arr. *Tact.* 28.6; Ael. *Tact.* 4.3; and Asclep. *Tact.* 2.1; Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, 74; Glenn R. Bugh, "Hellenistic Military Developments," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Glenn R. Bugh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 270; and F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Vol. 1, commentary on Books I-VI* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 281. For the diversity and sophistication of Alexander's army, note Bugh, "Hellenistic Military Developments," 269-75; and Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, 73. For the decline of cavalry numbers and abilities under the Successors, see Carey, *Warfare in the Ancient World*, 89.

¹³⁸ Polyb. 29.21 Conversely, S. P. Oakley argues that Livy saw the Macedonian phalanx as past its prime by the late third century B.C.E. Oakley, *Commentary III*, 188.

¹³⁹ Polyb. 18.32.13

same extent as Livy did, since Livy created a hypothetical faceoff between the Romans and Alexander. However, by arguing that the Roman army was better than the Macedonian army, which Alexander had made famous and which was still associated with him, Polybius engaged in a comparison that we must not overlook. Alexander is not Polybius' direct subject, but the association of the great king with the topic under discussion cannot be denied.

How Much More Successful Was the Roman Legion than the Macedonian Phalanx?

To begin his digression, in an attempt to illustrate the successes of the two military techniques, Polybius states, "The Macedonian formation was proved by operational experience to be superior to the others which were in use in Asia and Greece, while the Roman system overcame those employed in Africa and among all the peoples of Western Europe."¹⁴⁰ Polybius thus clearly described the two dominant military systems of the ancient Mediterranean world and noted their geographic spheres of original impact and their relative geographical separation. In the digression, Polybius expresses that he wished "to study the differences between them [the manipular legion and the pikeman phalanx], and to discover the reason why on the battlefield the Romans have *always* proved the victors."¹⁴¹ Firstly, Polybius' statement about Roman military success is not accurate. He completely disregards the defeats of the Romans at the hands of the Macedonian phalanx in 198 B.C.E. at Atrax and the campaign of King Pyrrhus of Epirus, who invaded Italy and won the battles of Heraclea in 280 and Asculum in 279 B.C.E. These last two battles have been immortalized as "Pyrrhic" victories because

¹⁴⁰ Polyb. 18.28.2

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 18.28.4. (The italics are mine.)

Pyrrhus gained a marginal victory at too high a cost. However, we must note that in both instances the Romans lost far more men than did Pyrrhus, nearly twice as many on both occasions.¹⁴² Carrying the field and losing only half the number of men as one's enemy can only be considered a victory, no matter what label with which one tries to brand it, to soften the blow.

Polybius is also incorrect when he states, "But even with the help of these methods he [Pyrrhus] did not succeed in winning a victory, and the outcome of all his battles was somewhat indecisive."¹⁴³ As previously discussed, this is a deceptive statement. F. W. Walbank remarks that Polybius is "unjust to Pyrrhus."¹⁴⁴ Pyrrhus won two legitimate victories against the Romans at Heraclea and Asculum.¹⁴⁵ Although Roman propaganda made a solid effort to deny Pyrrhus his victory, they misrepresented his accomplishments.¹⁴⁶ Polybius took what others might label as "Pyrrhic" victories and further distorted them into indecisive engagements. Perhaps Polybius equated the overall failure of Pyrrhus' invasion with a lack of individual successes on the battlefield. The battles of Heraclea and Asculum thus were indecisive in winning Pyrrhus the war.

¹⁴² According to Plutarch, Hieronymus of Cardia recorded the Roman losses at Heraclea at around 7,000 men to Pyrrhus' less than 4,000. In addition, at Asculum the Romans lost about 6,000 men to Pyrrhus' 3,505. We should mention that ancient battlefield casualty numbers are often exaggerated or incomplete. Dionysus of Halicarnassus demonstrates this point with his different figures of 15,000 Roman losses and 13,000 losses for Pyrrhus at Heraclea; and his lack of specific casualty numbers for Asculum, claiming 15,000 in total. See Plut. *Pyrrh.* 17.4 and 21.8-9.

¹⁴³ Polyb. 18.28.11

¹⁴⁴ F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Vol. 2, commentary on Books VII-XVIII* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 586.

¹⁴⁵ Jeff Champion, *Pyrrhus of Epirus* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2009), 70 and 91.

¹⁴⁶ Frontinus tells us that Pyrrhus lost half of his 40,000 man army at Asculum compared to 5,000 Roman losses. Frontin. *Str.* 2.3.21 Also, see Petros Garouphalias, *Pyrrhus, King of Epirus* (London: Stacey International, 1979), 92-3.

However, to deny Pyrrhus any victory over the Romans is to deny facts reported by reliable historians. Here we encounter Polybius' distortion of the past to fit his message for the future, namely that Rome and the Roman army were far superior militarily to all others; and, in particular, superior to a relative of Alexander the Great.¹⁴⁷

The Best Soldiers versus the Best Formation

Outside of this digression, it is interesting that Polybius considered the Macedonians to be the best and most ferocious soldiers in the entire world. He displayed the Romans as good soldiers but steady and calm.¹⁴⁸ Conversely, according to Polybius, the Macedonians were hardy, well disciplined, adaptable to land or water, and went "joying in war as if it were a feast."¹⁴⁹ Yet, A. M. Eckstein has established that the Romans were not otherwise viewed as fearless fighting machines, undefeatable in battle.¹⁵⁰ In fact, Livy states that Roman soldiers dreaded facing the pikeman phalanx face-to-face.¹⁵¹

Even though Polybius had a higher opinion of the average Macedonian soldier than of his Roman counterpart, this opinion does not appear to influence his comparison between the Macedonian phalanx versus the Roman manipular legion. Apparently, he did not feel that the best soldiers in the world necessarily created the greatest battle formation

¹⁴⁷ Pyrrhus was a second cousin of Alexander via Alexander's mother, Olympias.

¹⁴⁸ Polyb. 6.24.9

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 5.2.4-6.

¹⁵⁰ Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 202-3.

¹⁵¹ Livy 32.18.1

in the world. Here again, Polybius' text represents the Romans as superior to the Macedonians.

Why the Greeks Were Shocked after Rome's Domination of Macedon

The domination of the Romans over the various Greek states and Hellenistic kings in the second century B.C.E. came as quite a shock to much of the Hellenized east. In confirmation of this near universal astonishment, Polybius finished his digression by stating, "I have felt obligated to deal with this subject at some length, because so many Greeks on those occasions when the Macedonians suffered defeat [most noticeably at Cynoscephalae, Magnesia, and Pydna] regarded such an event as almost incredible, and many will still be at a loss to understand why and how the phalanx proves inferior by comparison with the Roman method of arming their troops."¹⁵² The purpose that he states for writing his digression is intriguing when we consider Alexander and his accomplishments.

There was confusion in the minds of Polybius' Greek audience, who knew well both the glory won in battle by the Macedonians and their military dominance under Alexander the Great. The Macedonians had defeated and suppressed many of the Greek states since Philip II rose to power in the mid-fourth century B.C.E. The Greeks were well acquainted with the military efficiency of the Macedonian phalanx. The reverses suffered by Macedonian armies under Philip V, Antiochus III, and Perseus had many in the Hellenistic world at a loss for words. To them the Macedonians were still the greatest soldiers in the world, as Polybius himself attests.¹⁵³ Through his first hand encounters

¹⁵² Polyb. 18.32.13

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 5.2.4-6.

with the Romans, Polybius came to conclude that the Romans ultimately were militarily superior, even surpassing the accomplishments of Alexander. However, the majority of the Greeks did not share this opinion, as indicated by Polybius at the end of his digression.¹⁵⁴ The knowledge of the great armies of Philip II and Alexander was still widespread, and the perceived strength of the armies of Philip V, Antiochus III, and Perseus still fresh in Greek minds.

By the second century B.C.E., Macedonian power had waned considerably, as a result of Alexander's death and the fracturing of his massive empire.¹⁵⁵ Antigonus II, Philip V, and Antiochus III made territorial resurgences, often against other Hellenic states.¹⁵⁶ However, no man came close to regaining Alexander's entire empire and little land, outside of that originally conquered by Alexander, was brought under the influence of the Hellenic successor states in the one hundred fifty years following his death. The prestige of Alexander and the mighty world he had once conquered at the tip of the sarissa would not have been lost on Polybius' second century B.C.E. Greek audience.¹⁵⁷ Livy may also hint at this idea that Macedonia and the Greek world were desperately hanging on to their waning prestige in the face of their lost military dominance in his

¹⁵⁴ Polyb. 18.32.13

¹⁵⁵ For the fracturing of Alexander's empire, the early wars of the Hellenic Successors, and the establishment of the Successor kingdoms, see A. B. Bosworth, *The Legacy of Alexander: Politics, Warfare, and Propaganda under the Successors* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002) and Winthrop Lindsay Adams, "The Hellenistic Kingdoms," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Glenn R. Bugh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 28-49.

¹⁵⁶ For Antigonus II, see Graham Shipley, *The Greek World After Alexander 323-30 BC* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 124-28; for Philip V, see Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 89, 90, 95, 101, 102, 106 n. 96, 111-13, 184 n. 10, 273, 288, and 306; and for Antiochus III, see John Ma, *Antiochus III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002), 53-102; and Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 6, 86, 95, 101, 105, 111-13, 259, 260, 270-71, 292-95, 299-301, 303, 306-7, and 314.

¹⁵⁷ A sarissa is the long pike carried into battle by the Macedonian phalanx.

account of a speech given by T. Quinctius Flaminius before the battle of Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C.E. Livy reports:

“They [the Romans] were going to fight the same Macedonians whom they had fought in the passes of Epirus, fenced, as they were, with mountains and rivers, and whom, after conquering the natural difficulties of the ground, they had dislodged and vanquished; the same, whom they had before defeated under the command of Publius Sulpicius, when they opposed their passage to Eordaea. That the kingdom of Macedonia had been hitherto *supported by its reputation, not by real strength*; and that even that reputation had, at length, vanished.”¹⁵⁸

Although we should mention that Livy benefited from an additional century and a half of hindsight, as discussed previously, Polybius and especially his Greek audience did not distinctly perceive a large separation between the Macedonians of Alexander’s period and those of Philip V’s or Perseus’ period. For Polybius and his fellow Greeks, the Roman domination of the Macedonians was significant and marked a clear transition from the power built by Alexander to the rising power that Rome was building.

One cannot emphasize enough the impact that Alexander had on the minds of the Hellenic world. He continued to influence the Hellenic conceptualization of their defeat at the hands of the Romans and their shattered military position in the second century B.C.E. Polybius’ digression indirectly speaks to this point. Polybius, a patriotic Achaean and at the same time a friend and supporter of Rome, clearly felt a need not only to address the Greek past but also to elucidate the Roman future.¹⁵⁹ There was a need to explain why the Hellenic world had been defeated and how Roman arms proved superior,

¹⁵⁸ Livy 33.8.4-5 (The italics are mine.)

¹⁵⁹ How to determine whom we do and do not consider Greeks in the ancient world can be just as difficult and sensitive today as it was in Polybius’ time. The Macedonians lived on the periphery of the Greek world at the time of Philip II and Alexander. Yet through their championing of Hellenism, the Greek language, religion, and customs, Alexander carried these Greek practices to the edges of the known world. See Paul Cartledge, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Ancient Greece* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35-53.

even over the successors of Alexander. Ultimately, in claiming the superiority of Roman military ability and success in his work, Polybius' greatest obstacle was Alexander the Great and his accomplishments.

The fact that Polybius felt a pressing need to explain to the befuddled Macedonians and Greeks how the Romans bested them in war demonstrates the serious influence that Alexander left on the ancient world. As observed previously, when Polybius represented Rome as superior to Alexander, he was forced to make unfair arguments; whether or not this happened intentionally is open to debate. Yet, what we can understand through Polybius' history is the competition, in both accomplishment and ability, between the reputation of Alexander and the reputation of the Romans. As we shall see, by the time of Livy's history, written in the late first century B.C.E., this issue had continued to loom large.

Final Thoughts on the Impact of Alexander on Polybius' Work

This study demonstrates that, although Polybius criticized Alexander where he thought the great king deserved such criticism, his overall opinion of Alexander was positive and respectful. Billows' article argues that Polybius was unlike the traditional "Alexander historians," who did little but praise the Macedonian, which is correct. However, Billows' opinion goes too far in arguing that Polybius' view of Alexander was primarily negative.

Although we have shown their assessments of Alexander to be more complex than Billows suggests, the passages describing Alexander's sack of Thebes provide Billows' strongest evidence. Even though Polybius respected Alexander's restraint toward the temples of Thebes, he did condemn Alexander's sack of the city.

Nevertheless, we should remember that, for Polybius, proper historiography required that any historical figure receive both praise and blame depending on his various deeds and actions.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the account of Thebes criticizing Alexander does not signify that Polybius generally held a negative opinion of Alexander. As this study demonstrates, Polybius' overall view of Alexander, although nuanced, is positive. In particular, he respected Alexander's piety, his military abilities, and the vastness of his accomplishments.

Billows is correct to observe that Polybius' discussions of Alexander prove more complex than those by many of the more traditional "Alexander historians." Still, for Polybius, Alexander was an impressive character, who could serve as a positive example for the Romans and deserved praise. Although not a dominant figure in Polybius' text itself, Alexander is an important topic in Polybius' work. When Polybius looked to what was for him the distant past, he considered Alexander the most significant person worth mentioning. This in itself is interesting and important.

In Polybius' work though, Alexander is not the most important subject of interest in the recent past or present. For Polybius, the Romans occupy this role. Through his history, we find a Greek attesting to the superiority of Rome and Roman accomplishments over even those of Alexander. This theme leads to unfair and misleading arguments, a few of which this study addresses. Polybius' text sometimes deals with Alexander unjustly. However, the respect for Alexander remains. In fact, the respect that Polybius held for the achievements of Alexander, which he expresses several times in his work, makes it clear how highly he regarded the Romans, who he portrays as

¹⁶⁰ Polyb. 4.8.7-8

superior. Ultimately, Polybius calls Alexander's supreme greatness into question, and he elevates the Romans and their achievements over the great Macedonian. What one must understand is that this is not out of anger or dislike. Polybius still thought Alexander was great; however, he thought the Romans were greater.

Chapter IV

Livy Pushes the Argument Further

Polybius explained how the Roman legion was superior to the Macedonian phalanx, but Livy took matters further by discussing how Alexander the Great would have failed had he attempted to invade Italy. In fact, Livy's engagement with this topic, and his efforts to portray Alexander as great but the Romans as greater are far more detailed and thorough than those of Polybius. In his digression on Alexander's hypothetical invasion of Italy found in Book 9, Livy most clearly depicts his theme of representing the Romans as superior to Alexander.¹⁶¹ This digression occurs in the middle of Livy's narrative of the Second Samnite War, following the Roman humiliation at the Caudine Forks.

As discussed in this section, there are numerous possible interpretations of this digression. Nevertheless, we should not consider the digression without also discussing the other surviving passages in Livy's work where Alexander appears or where Livy refers to him indirectly. Once we appreciate all the references to Alexander found in Livy's writing, the objective of Livy's digression takes on new meaning. We thus can establish how important the image of Alexander was to Livy throughout his work.

Livy utilized this image both to establish his personal opinion of Alexander and to help articulate his own opinion of his own people. This study will maintain that Livy's employment of Alexander and his image has a significant influence on Livy's larger

¹⁶¹ Apart from the work of Curtius Rufus, Livy's digression is the longest extant discussion of Alexander in the Latin literature of the Republic and early Principate. Additionally, Livy's digression was a likely influence on Curtius' portrayal of Alexander. See Oakley, *Commentary III*, 205 and 661-63.

narrative. The various Alexander passages, when brought together, encourage a new understanding and appreciation for both Livy's history and the Roman fascination with the great Macedonian. Although the digression suggests several Livian objectives, its fundamental purpose is to assert Roman superiority, over even Alexander. In this sense, Livy expanded the model established by Polybius. In fact, not only is this the fundamental purpose of the digression, but this interpretation of the subject also has major ramifications for the larger narrative once all the Alexander passages are considered together, whatever the problematic aspects of analysis.¹⁶²

To understand this digression and the other Alexander passages better, we briefly must discuss the author himself. Livy's work offers a viewpoint much different from that of Polybius. Livy may have shared Polybius' opinion on the differences between Alexander and Rome. However, Livy's differences with Polybius, both in background and in writing, are striking.

Livy was born in Patavium (modern day Padua) in roughly 59 B.C.E.; but much of his early life is unknown.¹⁶³ It is worth noting that Livy was not able to study in the schools of Greece, like many well-to-do Roman youths, and there are no records of him holding any political office throughout his life.¹⁶⁴ He never served the Roman state in an official political or military capacity. Although his history features numerous accounts of Rome's great wars, Livy never participated in or even saw a battle. Ultimately, Livy was

¹⁶² Throughout Livy's work, his desire to moralize led him to make factual changes and exaggerations to his history. See S. P. Oakley, *A Commentary on Livy Books XI-X, Vol. 1, Introduction and Book VI* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 115.

¹⁶³ John Briscoe, "Livy," in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 425.

¹⁶⁴ R. M. Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X of the History of Rome from its Foundation*, trans. and annotated by Betty Radice (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1982), 11.

what Polybius criticized as an “armchair historian.”¹⁶⁵ In addition, he often wrote history in the style of an orator.¹⁶⁶ Livy preferred a library to a battlefield and, in fact, followed Polybius’ *The Histories* closely in his books 35-45.¹⁶⁷

An Example of How Livy’s Military Accounts Can Prove Unreliable

Livy’s lack of firsthand experience is often apparent from his accounts of battles. We should view Livy’s discussions of strategy and battlefield tactics with caution. For example, in his recording of the Battle of Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C.E., Livy’s text depicts Philip V as ordering his phalanx “after laying aside their spears, whose length was a hindrance, to make use of their swords (*hastis positis, quarum longitudo impedimento erat, gladiis rem gerere iubet*).”¹⁶⁸ Here Livy has confused the battlefield narrative. At Cynoscephalae, Philip moved to the phalanx on his right wing, which was at the top of a ridge, and with the Romans steadily advancing he would have ordered his men to *bring down their spears for action*, not to discard them for their swords because

¹⁶⁵ Polyb. 12.25e-g

¹⁶⁶ Briscoe, “Livy,” in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, 426.

¹⁶⁷ John Roberts, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2005), 428.

¹⁶⁸ Livy 33.8.13

their pikes were a hindrance.¹⁶⁹ This is a critical difference. Livy, the “armchair historian,” demonstrates his lack of battlefield knowledge in this instance.

As the Roman legions steadily approached, Philip quickly reorganized his lines by halving their front and doubling their depth.¹⁷⁰ Philip was preparing an impenetrable front of spear points, not a mass of swordsmen.¹⁷¹ Such an order by Philip as Livy records would have been ridiculous and immediately disastrous. Livy is guilty of making a crucial mistake by misunderstanding the basic processes of phalanx warfare. Livy’s lack of military knowledge resurfaces in his digression and caused him to make critical errors when he discussed Alexander’s hypothetical invasion of Italy.¹⁷²

Livy the Historian

Instead of holding offices or joining the military, Livy devoted his attention to writing his vast universal history of the rise of Rome.¹⁷³ His work was to encompass the

¹⁶⁹ See Henry Bettenson, *Livy: Rome and the Mediterranean Books XXXI-XLV of the History of Rome from its Foundation*, trans. H. Bettenson (New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1976), 115 n.2. The soldiers of the pikeman phalanx marched into battle with their pikes in an upright position and in an open order. Out of this open order, the phalanx proved fairly flexible and able to change formation. It was only when about to enter combat that the soldiers of the phalanx lowered their pikes in a closed order and finally locked their shields. “Locked” is the vital word since once the first five to eight ranks of an extensive line deployed their fifteen to eighteen foot pikes it was difficult to move in any direction except forward without breaking the line. The Successors’ tendency to increase the depth of the phalanx from eight ranks, as it had been under Alexander, to sixteen ranks to thirty-two ranks only added to the loss of flexibility and mobility on the battlefield once deployed. A great deal of discipline was necessary to operate a pikeman phalanx army effectively, both at a ground and command level. As seen at Cynoscephalae and Pydna, this discipline was difficult to maintain even for experienced troops and officers. See Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, 73; Livy 33.9-10, 44.41; and Polyb. 18.24-5

¹⁷⁰ Livy 33.8.6-14

¹⁷¹ The process of discarding thousands of eighteen-foot pikes in battle order would have been incredibly difficult.

¹⁷² For Livy’s versus Polybius’ accounts of the Battle of Cynoscephalae, see Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, 183, 186-87, 188, and 189.

¹⁷³ Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 11.

history of Rome from its founding to the age of Augustus.¹⁷⁴ Of the original 142 books, only books 1-10 and 21-45 survive.¹⁷⁵ The remainder of Livy's history, except the no longer extant books 136 and 137, is preserved only in the brief excerpts of the *Periochae* (summaries).¹⁷⁶ Livy was free to compose such a massive work due to his patronage by Augustus. Livy came from a prestigious family and rubbed elbows with many of Rome's aristocracy, including the future emperor, Claudius, whom he tutored.¹⁷⁷ Although Livy knew the emperor Augustus, there is little evidence that the two were on friendly terms, although that did not keep Augustus and his court from offering him their patronage.¹⁷⁸

R. M. Ogilvie states that "the difference between Livy and the others [other ancient writers] is that his philosophical detachment enabled him to see history in terms of human characters and representative individuals rather than of partisan politics."¹⁷⁹ Livy followed in the philosophical tracts of Thucydides, arguing that human nature was constant and therefore predictable. He utilized this philosophical framework throughout his work.¹⁸⁰ Livy was also a traditionalist. He was of the opinion that the ancients, in his

¹⁷⁴ John Briscoe, "Livy (Titus Livius (*RE* 9))," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 877.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 877.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 877-78.

¹⁷⁷ Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 11.

¹⁷⁸ In fact, Livy's digression is noticeably pro-Republic and we can see it partly as a Livian commentary on the possible dangers that the unrivalled power of the Roman state might face under the sole rule of Augustus, even though Augustus claimed to have restored the Republic. In the digression, Alexander came to represent the corrupting ability of ultimate power, a topic that had an ongoing vitality in Augustan Rome. We can see Livy as warning that autocratic power can lead to a dramatic downfall. See *ibid.* 11; Spencer, *The Roman Alexander*, 44; and Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 82-3. Although Oakley sees the digression as a stance against one man rule, he is unsure if the digression reflects Livy's thoughts on Augustus. Note Oakley, *Commentary III*, 192, 199.

¹⁷⁹ Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 12.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

case the early Romans, were morally superior to their descendants. Livy had a respect and longing for the traditions of the past that is clearly visible in his text. G. Miles argues, “Livy contrasts the vitality of early Rome with the degenerate, self-destructive Rome of his own age, and he ascribes that contrast to the influences of wealth and a human propensity to succumb to its attractions.”¹⁸¹ Through his study of history, Livy thought that “things had got worse and worse.”¹⁸² J. Briscoe states that Livy believed that “a serious moral decline had taken place by his own time, and appears to have lacked confidence that Augustus could reverse it.”¹⁸³ However, Ogilvie argues that Livy did believe that redemption for Rome was possible in the future.¹⁸⁴ This positive evaluation of early Rome in comparison to the more recent past plays an important role in Livy’s digression on Alexander.¹⁸⁵

Livy’s digression consistently voices skepticism about Alexander’s military prospects in Italy. The question is: why? However, to answer this question we must first establish Livy’s motives behind the inclusion of this digression in his history. Livy certainly respected Alexander’s military ability, which is evident in several passages where he directly praises or uses sources that praise Alexander’s abilities and

¹⁸¹ Gary B. Miles, *Livy: Reconstructing Early Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 76.

¹⁸² Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 13-4.

¹⁸³ Briscoe, “Livy,” in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, 427.

¹⁸⁴ See Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 14. Also, note Livy 1.19.3, 4.20.7, and 34.4.8

¹⁸⁵ Ironically, Niccolò Machiavelli later utilized Livy’s history in his series of discourses on Livy in order to help demonstrate the perceived military regressions of his own time and establish another theme where there was a belief in the superiority of the ways of the past. In Machiavelli’s work, he praised the Roman military system of Livy’s period. See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Julia C. Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 191-94.

accomplishments, namely 8.3.7, 9.16.12-9, 9.17.2, 35.14.5-12, 45.7.3, and 45.9.5-7, all of which are discussed in greater detail below. However, he also felt the need to portray his own people as greater than the Macedonian king, as evidenced by the digression's inclusion. Alexander had a significant influence on Livy's thoughts and work, which he himself freely admitted, stating, "The very mention of this great king and commander [Alexander] evokes certain thoughts on which I have often brooded in silence."¹⁸⁶ Thus, Livy verified in his own writing the impact that Alexander still had on a Roman of the Late Republic and early Principate. More than three hundred years after his death, Alexander the Great still had considerable relevance to Livy.¹⁸⁷

The Impact of Alexander on Livy's History Outside of the Digression

Let us begin with a brief discussion of the sections outside of the digression where Livy's text either mentions Alexander the Great directly or where we can infer that Livy alludes to him from the contexts. In the majority of these examples, Livy expresses respect for Alexander and his successes, either directly or by implication. Outside of the digression and throughout the course of his narrative, whenever Livy mentions Alexander, it is usually in a positive manner. It would be a mistake to read Livy's digression by itself and then formulate his entire opinion of Alexander without consulting the other examples. In fact, the main purpose of Livy's digression, namely demonstrating why Alexander would have failed to conquer the Romans, lends itself to a critical stance on Alexander and his actions, which inherently limits a completely positive assessment.

¹⁸⁶ Livy, 9.17.2

¹⁸⁷ In fact, nearly seven hundred years after his death, Alexander the Great and his actions were still influential in the Roman world and at the forefront of Roman thought; we can see this in the writings of Emperor Julian, ca. 355-63 C.E. For a wonderfully entertaining comparison of Rome's greatest emperors and Alexander, see Emperor Julian's *The Caesars*.

The other passages relating to Alexander thus are necessary to get a balanced view of Livy's assessment of the great king. Ultimately, Livy believed in Rome's unmatched greatness, even when compared to Alexander. However, the following passages demonstrate that Livy shared the belief that Alexander was great himself.

The Failure of an Alexander in Italy

The first mention of Alexander the Great in Livy's extent history occurs in Book 8 after a short introduction to the ill-fated invasion of Italy, in 334 B.C.E., by Alexander of Epirus, Alexander the Great's uncle and brother-in-law.¹⁸⁸ Almost foretelling the future troubles that the Romans would face at the hands of Pyrrhus decades later, Alexander, king of Molossia, sailed from Epirus to southern Italy at the behest of the city of Tarentum in order to lend it aid in a war against the Lucanians.¹⁸⁹ Livy judged that Alexander of Epirus held vast ambitions for his invasion of Italy. Livy argues that this invasion was a threat to Rome because, had it been successful, Alexander of Epirus would have made war against the Romans.¹⁹⁰

Livy then quickly turned to Alexander the Great, stating, "This was also the era of the exploits of Alexander the Great, who was the son of this man's sister [Olympias, daughter of Neoptolemus], and who fortune snuffed out as a young man due to disease (*iuvenem fortuna morbo exstinxit*), in another quarter of the world, after proving himself

¹⁸⁸ Livy's text incorrectly dates Alexander of Epirus' invasion in 340 B.C.E. Livy 8.3.6 Also, see A. B. Bosworth, "Alexander (6) I," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 60.

¹⁸⁹ Bosworth, "Alexander (6) I," 60.

¹⁹⁰ Livy 8.3.6

to be invincible in wars (*invictum bellis*).”¹⁹¹ Livy’s acknowledgement of Alexander’s negative *fortuna* resulting in his untimely death after proving himself invincible in war is striking, since later, in the digression, Livy argues the contrary position: “I do not dispute that Alexander was an exceptional general, but his reputation is enhanced by the fact that he died while still young and before he had time to experience any change of fortune (*nondum alteram fortunam expertus*).”¹⁹² In 8.3, this judgment is only one of several Livian statements that displays an attitude toward Alexander different from the one found in the digression, demonstrating the need for caution when looking at the digression and the importance of considering all of Livy’s thoughts on Alexander, found throughout his history, in order to establish his overall opinion. It seems that by dying of an illness unexpectedly at the height of his power Alexander in fact did suffer at the hands of fortune. In 8.3.7, Livy is not here denying Alexander’s ill fate as he later did in 9.17.5. We will return to this point later.

In the second half of this statement, Livy demonstrates the highest respect for Alexander’s military accomplishments. He contrasts the invincibility of Alexander the Great in war with the failure of his uncle, by the same name, in Italy. Although Livy here acknowledges Alexander’s invincibility in war, he does not express this opinion in his digression. There, Livy’s text portrays Rome as superior to the great Macedonian in military matters. In addition, the digression changes the way one can interpret this passage. We can also understand Livy’s discussion, which contrasts the success of Alexander the Great with the failure of his uncle, as subtly linking – not contrasting –

¹⁹¹ Livy 8.3.7

¹⁹² *Ibid.* 9.17.5.

Alexander of Epirus' failure in Italy to the hypothetical invasion by Alexander the Great.¹⁹³

The next mention of Alexander is again in association with Alexander of Epirus. Livy briefly records the course of Alexander of Epirus' ill-fated invasion of Italy. Alexander, having been warned that his death awaited him at Pandosia and thinking that this meant Pandosia in Epirus, hurried to Italy where he enjoyed initial success.¹⁹⁴ Ultimately, his success led him to a ring of hills near Pandosia in Italy where poor weather allowed two thirds of his army to be ambushed.¹⁹⁵ Through a great act of daring, Alexander and a portion of his force broke out of the trap and attempted to cross a nearby river where he was treacherously murdered by one of his Italian allies and later mutilated.¹⁹⁶ It is only through the pity of a local woman that his bones were eventually returned to his family in Epirus.¹⁹⁷ It is not insignificant that Livy digressed from his larger narrative and illustrated the failure of an Alexander in Italy. Livy mentions Alexander the Great at the end of this section as a relation of Alexander of Epirus through his mother Olympias, who was a recipient of her brother's bones.¹⁹⁸

To be sure, there is nothing in this passage overtly negative toward Alexander the Great. Livy even describes Alexander of Epirus more as a victim of ill fortune than an evil or foolish character. However, this section is important for other reasons. As noted,

¹⁹³ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 71-72.

¹⁹⁴ Livy 8.24.2-5

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 8.24.5-9.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 8.24.10-4.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 8.24.15-17.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 8.24.17.

Livy explains that a discussion of Alexander of Epirus' invasion is necessary, even though it did not directly affect Rome, because it involved a foreign force invading Italy and because he believed, had it been successful, that this Alexander would have made war on Rome.¹⁹⁹ It was fortune that prevented this outcome.²⁰⁰ R. Morello convincingly argues that once we take the argument of Livy's digression into account, by mentioning Alexander the Great in this passage, Livy may connect the disastrous invasion led by his uncle with Alexander himself, and his hypothetical invasion.²⁰¹ For in his digression, Livy states, "He [Alexander the Great] would have seen in the passes of Apulia and the mountains of Lucania the traces of the recent disaster which befell his house when his uncle Alexander, King of Epirus, perished."²⁰² Livy's association of Alexander with his uncle's failed invasion of Italy becomes clear.

In addition, it is not lost on the audience that the Lucanians, who decimated the army brought to Italy by Alexander of Epirus, ultimately were defeated by the Romans and subjected to Roman rule. In this sense, the Romans proved successful where Alexander of Epirus had failed. It can be argued that Livy possibly meant for this failure to reflect subtly on his kinsman, Alexander the Great. Either way, passage 8.24, although it is not a criticism, does not reflect well on Alexander the Great. Livy asserts Alexander's military invincibility in 8.3.7. Yet, by twice mentioning him in association

¹⁹⁹ Livy 8.3.6 and 8.24.18

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 8.24.18.

²⁰¹ See Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 71-72.

²⁰² Livy 9.17.17

with his uncle, who failed utterly in Italy, Livy seems to signal what he will argue in the digression about Alexander's inability to obtain success against the Romans in Italy.²⁰³

The Association of Papirius Cursor with Alexander the Great

The third mention of Alexander occurs immediately prior to the digression, where the Livian hero Lucius Papirius Cursor is described as a possible equal to the great Macedonian. This discussion of Papirius prior to the digression is significant because it introduces topics such as Roman military discipline and the perpetuity of Rome's authority.²⁰⁴ Livy, speaking of Papirius' abilities, states,

There can be no doubt that in his generation, in which no other was ever more productive in great qualities, there was no single man who did more to uphold the Roman State. Indeed people regard him as one who might indeed have been a match in spirit for Alexander the Great (*quin eum parem destinant animis magno Alexandro ducem*), if the latter, after subjugating Asia, had turned his arms against Europe.²⁰⁵

By establishing Papirius as the greatest Roman of the greatest Roman generation and as a possible match for Alexander, Livy positioned himself well to launch into his digression. However, Livy's discussion of Papirius' qualities not only establishes the high level of competition that Livy felt Alexander would have faced during his invasion, it also helps establish Livy's high opinion of Papirius' Alexander-like qualities. No less significant, Livy implies that only the greatest Roman of the greatest generation *might* have been a match for Alexander. This attests to Livy's high opinion of the great king.

²⁰³ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 71-72.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 71.

²⁰⁵ Livy 9.16.19

Next Livy documents the military abilities of Papirius, who in 309 B.C.E. celebrated a triumph over the Samnites.²⁰⁶ What follows in the text is a list of personal qualities, all of these traits commonly attributed to Alexander. Livy described Papirius as a great soldier who was high-spirited, strong, and fast of foot; he had a great capacity for food and wine; and he was tough on his soldiers but shared in their toil, making him popular.²⁰⁷ In addition, he possessed fairness, clemency, a sense of humor, and a great power of command.²⁰⁸

According to Livy, it was because of these qualities that Roman writers often compared Papirius to Alexander. By acknowledging the comparison, Livy recognized that these were the traditional qualities of Alexander and part of his image. Moreover, Livy positively describes almost all of the characteristics.²⁰⁹ This passage establishes Livy's positive perception of Alexander. In depicting a Roman counterpart to Alexander, Livy in fact expressed his own opinion of what it meant to be worthy of that comparison. For Livy, Alexander was the apex of military quality and it would have taken the greatest of Romans to match him.

The Piety of Alexander, the Piety of Scipio

Outside of this digression, Alexander does not make another appearance in Livy's work for another seventeen books.²¹⁰ In Book 26, Livy links Publius Cornelius Scipio

²⁰⁶ Livy 9.16.11

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 9.16.12-15.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 9.16.16-18.

²⁰⁹ Spencer, *The Roman Alexander*, 53.

²¹⁰ This substantial absence demonstrates that, like in Polybius' work, Alexander was an important figure in Livy's history, but not a central subject.

Africanus, another one of the greatest Roman military leaders, to Alexander. Details about Scipio's early military career and success rendered this a plausible match. Indeed, Livy's text connects the legend of Scipio with the legend of Alexander. In 211 B.C.E., Scipio, then in his mid-twenties, was offered the command in Spain after the deaths of his father and uncle in battle against the Carthaginians during the Second Punic War.²¹¹ Livy relates that from his youth Scipio claimed a connection with the gods through dreams and visions that carried messages and commands.²¹² As a young man, he established a specific connection with Jupiter by spending time in the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus every day before commencing any business.²¹³ In response to this, Livy states,

This practice, which was adhered to through the whole of his life, occasioned in some persons a belief in a notion which generally prevailed, whether deliberately propagated or not, that he [Scipio] was a man of divine extraction; and revived a report as equally absurd and fabulous as that formerly spread regarding Alexander the Great, that he [Scipio] was begotten by a huge serpent, whose monstrous form was frequently observed in the bedchamber of his mother, but which, on anyone's coming in, suddenly unfolding his coils, glided out of sight.²¹⁴

Some thus perceived Scipio in the likeness of Alexander and Livy records that Scipio not only did nothing to deny this suggested link, but he even attempted to strengthen it.²¹⁵ In general, this section parallels the sentiments of 10.2 and 10.5 of Polybius. However, Polybius made no mention there of Scipio resembling Alexander. It is not trivial that

²¹¹ R. M. Errington, *The Dawn of Empire: Rome's Rise to World Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 84-85.

²¹² Livy 26.19.3-4

²¹³ *Ibid.* 26.19.5.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* 26.19.6-7.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* 26.19.8.

Livy offers the Alexander comparison, as it demonstrates Livy's keen interest in Roman associations with Alexander.

To be fair, Livy did not believe in the validity of the stories of Alexander's and Scipio's snake conceptions, and in fact, dismissed them. However, a refusal to believe in the legend does not make the association insignificant. By including the comparison, Livy indicates an interest in such associations. Additionally, the snake legend is not the only topic discussed in this section. Here Livy associates Scipio, albeit indirectly, with Alexander, owing to their piety, and attributed him with superhuman qualities. We discussed both of these aspects of Alexander's character in our analysis of Polybius.²¹⁶

Livy finishes this passage by asserting that attributes and actions such as these established Scipio as greater than other men.²¹⁷ As in the previously discussed passage on Papirius, by complimenting Scipio in a passage where he is linked to Alexander, Livy also subtly passes positive judgment on Alexander. Livy thus recognizes a tremendous sense of piety in both men. Additionally, both men exploited a commonly held belief through their association with the divine to inspire the masses and accomplish great deeds. The fears of the Roman citizenry about giving such immense responsibility to Scipio at a young age disappeared as they perceived that, like Alexander, Scipio was a great man and a favorite of the gods.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ See Polyb. 5.10.6-8 and 12.23

²¹⁷ Livy 26.19.8

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* 26.19.9.

Alexander Compared to Pyrrhus, Hannibal, and Scipio

The next appearance of Alexander in the text occurs nine books later. In Book 35, Livy relates a story about the famous meeting between Scipio Africanus and Hannibal. Prior to the war with Antiochus the Great, Roman delegates were present in Asia Minor. After a meeting with King Eumenes of Pergamum, who advocated war between Rome and Antiochus, Publius Villius, one of the Roman commissioners, travelled to Ephesus.²¹⁹ Once in Ephesus, Villius met several times with Hannibal, who five years after his defeat in the Second Punic War had now left his homeland for the East and was offering his skills as an advisor to Antiochus.²²⁰ Nothing of great importance came out of these meetings; however, Livy states that some historians record Scipio as present at these gatherings and carrying on a conversation with his one time nemesis.²²¹

The inclusion of the story, which most scholars believe untrue, further emphasizes both Livy's respect for Alexander and his belief that the Romans were greater.²²² We should mention that Livy does not question the authenticity of the account. The story, and its persistence over the centuries, illustrates a late republican fascination with and admiration for Alexander. Therefore, we should not disregard it completely as a telling example of how the two greatest generals of their time saw themselves or how others saw them in relation to Alexander. Livy relates the conversation thusly:

²¹⁹ Livy 35.13.6-10, 14.1

²²⁰ *Ibid.* 35.14.2-3.

²²¹ Livy cites Quintus Claudius Quadrigarius, following the Greek work of Acilius as his source. Livy 35.14.5. Also, see John Briscoe, *A Commentary on Livy Books XXXIV-XXXVII* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981), 165.

²²² For a discussion of the questionable authenticity of the passage, see Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 166.

Scipio asked Hannibal, “whom he thought the greatest general of all time.” And he answered, “Alexander, king of Macedonia; because, with a small band, he defeated armies whose numbers were beyond reckoning; and because he had overrun the remotest regions, the mere visiting of which was a thing above human aspiration.” Scipio then asked, “to whom he gave the second place.” And he replied, “To Pyrrhus; for he first taught the method of encamping; and besides, no one ever showed more exquisite judgment, in choosing his ground, and disposing his posts; while he also possessed the art of conciliating mankind to himself to such a degree, that the nations of Italy wished him, though a foreign prince, to hold the sovereignty among them, rather than the Roman people, who had so long possessed the dominion of that part of the world.” On him [Scipio] proceeding to ask, “whom he esteemed the third.” Hannibal replied, “Myself, beyond doubt.” On this Scipio laughed, and added, “What would you have said if you had conquered me?” “Then,” replied the other, “I would have placed Hannibal, not only before Alexander and Pyrrhus, but before all other commanders.” This answer, turned with Punic dexterity, and conveying an unexpected kind of flattery, was highly gratifying to Scipio, as it set him apart from the crowd of commanders, as one of incomparable eminence.²²³

Livy thus linked Alexander, Pyrrhus, Hannibal, and Scipio all within one passage. Livy’s text here presents an exclusive club of the greatest generals of the ancient world. We can deduce a great deal from this passage.

First, in this story both Hannibal and Scipio place Alexander above all others without argument. This gives us a sense that, according to Livy, for the leading kings, generals, and statesmen of the ancient world, Alexander was present in thought, aspired to in accomplishment, and the measuring stick for all who followed him. This is because of the breadth of his conquests and his ability to overcome insurmountable odds.

Livy here also awards high praise to Pyrrhus, the cousin of Alexander.²²⁴ Unlike the two passages involving the failure of Alexander of Epirus, this praise of Alexander

²²³ Livy, 35.14.5-12 For a brief discussion of Livy’s use of this passage, see Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 165-66.

²²⁴ Champion, *Pyrrhus of Epirus*, 18.

the Great's second cousin mostly reflects well upon Alexander. This is not direct praise by Livy; but by including this story, Livy indicates that he approved its messages. This scene furnishes a list of the greatest generals in an order that Livy does not challenge. We also find the theme of great generals from the third century B.C.E. emulating Alexander's vigor in war only to fall short of his universally accepted supremacy. By the late first century B.C.E., little had changed to remove Alexander from his prestigious and dominant position in the minds of the Romans, as Livy's incorporation of this passage into his work indicates.²²⁵

One further aspect we should discuss is that although the ancients recognized Pyrrhus as one of history's greatest generals, his invasion of Italy eventually failed, as had that of Alexander of Epirus. Additionally, the main difference between Alexander of Epirus' invasion and Pyrrhus' was that the latter had clashed with the Romans. Although Pyrrhus came out the victor in two major battles, at Heraclea in 280 B.C.E. and Asculum in 279 B.C.E., ultimately he failed to conquer Rome and later was forced to abandon the territory that he had gained in Italy after the costly stalemate at Beneventum in 275 B.C.E. This passage does not mention directly Pyrrhus' ultimate failure to subdue the Romans; however, Hannibal's defeat at the hands of the Romans might remind the audience of Pyrrhus' failure.

Since Pyrrhus desired to represent himself in the image of Alexander and since he brought a well experienced army in the style of Alexander's to Italy, it is not difficult to

²²⁵ In fact, although the passage ranks Pyrrhus second behind Alexander, J. M. Mossman argues that the Romans understood that Pyrrhus was no Alexander and that there was a considerable gap in reputation between the two. See J. M. Mossman, "Plutarch, Pyrrhus, and Alexander," in *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition*, ed. Philip A. Stadter (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 99-100.

imagine Livy's interpretation of Pyrrhus' unsuccessful invasion.²²⁶ Unfortunately, Livy's account of the Pyrrhic War is not extant. All that remains are the excerpts of the

Periochae, which relate the following:

[In 280 B.C.E.] King Pyrrhus of the Epirotes came to Italy to support the Tarentines. . . . Consul [Publius] Valerius Lavinius unsuccessfully fought against Pyrrhus [at Heraclea], especially because the soldiers were not used to the elephants and were terrified. After the battle, Pyrrhus inspected the bodies of the Romans that had fallen during the fight and noticed that they were all directed against their enemy. Pillaging the country, he proceeded to the city of Rome. The Senate sent Gaius Fabricius to Pyrrhus to negotiate the return of the prisoners-of-war. In vain, the king tried to persuade him to abandon his country. The prisoners were released without payment. Pyrrhus' deputy Cineas was sent to the Senate to organize the king's entrance into the city to negotiate a peace treaty. It was decided to discuss this matter with all the senators, but Appius Claudius (who had not visited the deliberations for a long time because he suffered from an eye disease) came to the Senate and persuaded the senators with his speech not to give up. Gnaeus Domitius, the first plebeian censor, celebrated the lustrum ceremony. 287,222 citizens were registered. [In 279 B.C.E.] For the second time, the Romans fought unsuccessfully against Pyrrhus [at Asculum]. . . . When consul Gaius Fabricius heard from someone who had fled from Pyrrhus, that he could poison the king, he sent him back to the king with a report of what he had done. It [book 13] also contains an account of the successful wars against the Lucanians, Bruttians, Samnites, and Etruscans. [In 278 B.C.E.] Pyrrhus went to Sicily. . . . When consul Curius Dentatus was recruiting an army, he sold the possessions of a man who had not appeared. [In 275] He defeated Pyrrhus [at Beneventum], who had returned, and expelled him from Italy. . . . The censors celebrated the ritual cleansing of the state after 271,224 citizens had been registered.²²⁷

There are several points of interest in this summary of Livy's account. Although the Romans lost in the first battle, they fought bravely. Pyrrhus did not successfully convince a prominent Roman to turn traitor, though Pyrrhus admired the man. Pyrrhus marched on Rome unsuccessfully and the Romans refused to come to terms of peace. Although the

²²⁶ Champion, *Pyrrhus of Epirus*, 109 and 132. Note also Polyb. 18.3.3-8

²²⁷ Livy *Per.* 12.6, 13.1-9, 13.11-12, 14.1, and 14.3-5

Romans lost in the second battle, they proved themselves honorable by returning a would-be assassin to Pyrrhus. Additionally, successful wars against his allies mitigated Rome's losses to Pyrrhus.

The immediate pairing of a Roman defeat with a series of "revenge" expeditions is a theme of Livy's work, which he further develops when describing the Roman defeat at the Caudine Forks and its aftermath (9.8-16).²²⁸ In addition, the summary praises the Romans for expelling Pyrrhus from Italy following the Battle of Beneventum. This battle cannot be claimed as the sole cause for Pyrrhus' leaving Italy since it was Pyrrhus' inability to secure reinforcements from the East that may have forced his departure.²²⁹ In addition, he did not leave Italy immediately and, when departing, did not give up hopes of a return, leaving a strong garrison at Tarentum.²³⁰ However, victory was costly. The 16,000 person drop in the number of citizens in the census between 280-275 B.C.E., over a five percent total population decrease, speaks to the heavy Roman losses suffered in the Pyrrhic War.

There are similarities between themes figuring in the *Periochae* and those found in Livy's preserved work. These similarities help us to decipher some of what Livy's opinions and goals would have been in the original text. The summary represents the

²²⁸ Although Livy argued that the Romans avenged their defeat at the Caudine Forks after a series of victories and thus forced the Samnites to come to peace terms, modern scholars highly dispute this version of events. See T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000-264 BC)* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 353; E. T. Salmon, *Samnium and the Samnites* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 226ff; and M. W. Frederiksen, review of *Samnium and the Samnites*, by E. T. Salmon, *Journal of Roman Studies* 58, Parts 1 and 2 (1968): 226. Ultimately, the revenge campaign that Livy's text describes is fantasy. Note Oakley, *Commentary III*, 34-38. For Livy's use of this section concerning the digression, see Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 73, 74, 75, 81, and 83.

²²⁹ Champion, *Pyrrhus of Epirus*, 123.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

mighty Pyrrhus as no match for the resilience of Rome, and it emphasizes Rome's ultimate victory. Pyrrhus' invasion of Italy, like that of Alexander of Epirus', failed. It also is important to remember here that Livy associated Alexander the Great with Pyrrhus elsewhere in his work.²³¹ Hence, in Livy's missing account of the Pyrrhic War, further associations of Pyrrhus with Alexander the Great seem probable.

Yet, ultimately in 35.14.5-10, Livy may have subtly associated Alexander with another relative who failed to conquer Italy. Alexander's hypothetical failure in the digression, added to Livy's account of Pyrrhus' failed invasion preserved by the *Periochae*, and the later direct association between Pyrrhus and Alexander connect these subjects for Livy's audience. Livy linked not only the skills of Pyrrhus' generalship but also his inability to conquer Rome indirectly to Alexander. Livy may well have been thinking partially of Pyrrhus when he came to his judgment in the digression about Alexander the Great's inability to succeed in Italy.

The second half of the scene between Scipio and Hannibal is as important as the first in establishing Livy's overall opinion of Alexander. Because of Scipio's victory over Hannibal in the Second Punic War, the story portrays Scipio as shocked when Hannibal ranked himself in the third position. Hannibal states that conquering the Romans would have made him the greatest general of all time, eclipsing even Alexander. In addition, in order to conquer the Romans, Hannibal would have had to defeat Scipio. Livy thus suggests his own deep respect for the generalship of Scipio by including the passage, and the passage itself recognizes the greatness of the Romans. By conquering Rome, Hannibal would have displaced Alexander, who only conquered easterners. This theme

²³¹ Livy 9.17.14 and 35.14.5-10

will reappear in the digression. Again, we see Livy using a passage in his history to establish the theme of Alexander as great, but the Romans as greater. Finally, as Morello argues, once we consider the digression in connection with this passage, Rome has the honor of defeating all three of the greatest generals of all time.²³² Livy's effort to establish of the Romans as the mightiest of all powers was complete.²³³

The next passage involving Alexander is of little importance. Livy explains how Alexander of Megalopolis claimed descent from Alexander the Great and, to this point, had named his two sons Philip and Alexander.²³⁴ The claim was dubious; but Philip, due to his gullible and vain nature, aspired to the Macedonian throne with the backing of Antiochus III and the Aetolians.²³⁵ Here Alexander's name is associated with the actions of a fool; however, it is clear that Livy did not believe in the family connection and hence did not pass negative judgment on Alexander.

Parallels between the Roman Victory at Magnesia and Alexander's Victory at Gaugamela

Two books later, Livy recorded the Roman victory over Antiochus III at the Battle of Magnesia in 189 B.C.E. This section does not mention Alexander directly. Nevertheless, Livy's description of the battle, which he likely based on a Polybian account no longer extant, nearly parallels Alexander's victory over the Persian King

²³² Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 70 n.40.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Livy 35.47.5

²³⁵ *Ibid.* 35.47.6-8.

Darius III at Gaugamela in 331 B.C.E.²³⁶ Since Polybius was likely the source of the account, this has further implications for our study. Much of what we discuss about Livy in this section we can associate with Polybius as well.

In the description of the armies and battle, we can interpret Livy's (or Polybius') portrayal of the Romans in the light of Alexander's army at Gaugamela, and the rendering of Antiochus as a second Darius fits this model as well. In Livy's account, the vastly outnumbered yet elite Roman army decimates the immense, eclectic eastern army of Antiochus after he fled the battlefield. The parallels are striking.

Livy recorded Antiochus' strength at 60,000 infantry and more than 12,000 cavalry prior to the battle.²³⁷ He also recorded the Roman army, with its Greek allies, at about 27,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry.²³⁸ At the Battle of Gaugamela, Arrian recorded Alexander's army at 40,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry.²³⁹ Darius III's numbers are immensely controversial, especially in infantry numbers.²⁴⁰ However, since Darius'

²³⁶ Livy utilized Polybius' history extensively for the various peace negotiations both before and after the battle. Polybius' account of the battle does not survive because what we have of Polybius in this section is from the Constantinian excerpts of the *de legat. gent.* See Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 2, 338-43, 358-62; and Walbank, *Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Vol. 3, 3, 4, 5, 105-11. Polybius' sources are more difficult to establish since he used many and wove them all together. This is especially true for Polybius' accounts of the Greek East. See Walbank, *Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Vol. 1, 26-35.

²³⁷ Livy 37.37.9 See also Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 344-45.

²³⁸ Livy 37.39.7-10 Note also Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 347-48.

²³⁹ Arr. *Anab.* 3.12.5

²⁴⁰ Arrian placed the number at an amazing 1,000,000 infantry and 40,000 cavalry. *Ibid.* 3.8.6. However, around 100,000 infantry and 30,000-50,000 cavalry is a plausible estimate. Also, see Arther Ferrill, who places the total number between 100,000 and 250,000. Arther Ferrill, *The Origins of War: From the Stone Age to Alexander the Great*, rev. ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 208. John Warry argues for nearly 100,000 total men, with the emphasis on the cavalry. Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, 81. Albert Devine estimates only 50,000 infantry and 25,000 cavalry. Albert Devine, "Alexander the Great," in *Warfare in the Ancient World*, ed. John Hackett (New York, NY: Facts on File, 1989), 104. For a concise discussion of the figures given by our other primary sources, see P. A. Brunt, trans., *Arrian: Anabasis of Alexander Books I-IV*, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 510-11. Also, note Carey, *Warfare in the Ancient World*, 26, 26 n.68, 76, and 76 n.33.

infantry proved of little use in the battle, modern scholars have placed emphasis almost solely on his cavalry strength, where Arrian's assessment of 40,000 and Curtius Rufus' evaluation of 45,000 appear appropriate.²⁴¹ Thus, although the historical tradition established an enormous difference in infantry at Gaugamela, which clearly dwarfs that found at Magnesia, the discrepancy in cavalry is similar for Alexander and the Romans. The ancients clearly saw Gaugamela as one of the most lopsided battles of all time; and therefore, the greatest victory in history. Also, this study is not arguing that Livy (or Polybius) saw Magnesia as Gaugamela's equal; rather, Livy's account shows several parallels between Magnesia and Gaugamela, which have implications for the Livian (and Polybian) theme of associating Rome with Alexander. Ultimately, what is important to take from this is that both Alexander and the Romans faced a vast eastern army, far outnumbering their own.

Livy's text describes Antiochus' army, like Darius', as a force of many different races and equipment.²⁴² Antiochus, again like Darius, used his great advantage in cavalry to extend his line out well past the extent of his enemy's front.²⁴³ Also included in both eastern armies were elephants and scythe chariots, which in both battles were meant to be difference makers but proved to offer no advantage.²⁴⁴ John Briscoe also makes this connection, stating that Gaugamela was "the only other occasion when they [scythe chariots] were intended to play a significant part in a major battle, with equally disastrous

²⁴¹ Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.6; and Curt. 4.12.13

²⁴² Both armies had over twenty different ethnic groups. Livy 37.40; and Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.3-6 Note also Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 348-51.

²⁴³ Livy 37.41.3; and Arr. *Anab.* 3.13.1

²⁴⁴ Livy 37.40.3-4, 41.3-12, and 42.5; and Arr. *Anab.* 3.11.6-7, 3.13.2, and 3.13.5-6 See also Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 349, 352-4, and 355.

results.”²⁴⁵ In both battles, a gap opened in the left center of the line due to miscalculations (on the part of Antiochus and Darius) involving the scythe chariots.²⁴⁶ Furthermore, in both battles, the Romans and Alexander exploited this gap with a cavalry charge, creating mass confusion and the general rout of the enemy left.²⁴⁷ Both Antiochus’ and Darius’ cavalry on the right wing achieved some success and threatened the enemy camp; however, the Romans’ and Alexander’s left flank held long enough to allow reinforcements and cavalry from the successful right to arrive in relief.²⁴⁸ Most tellingly, just like Darius, Antiochus fled the battlefield and his army was slaughtered.²⁴⁹ Our sources also report that both the Romans and Alexander suffered few casualties.²⁵⁰

Gaugamela and Magnesia were significant war-ending battles. Darius effectively lost his control over the Persian Empire and the Romans forced Antiochus to abandon all his lands west of the Taurus Mountains.²⁵¹ Both Alexander and the Romans had toppled

²⁴⁵ Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 352-3. See also F. E. Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), 47.

²⁴⁶ Due to the rout of the scythe chariots into Antiochus’ own ranks, the supporting auxiliaries fled, exposing the line. Livy 37.42.1 In response to Alexander’s cavalry movements on his right flank, Darius, in order to preserve the usefulness of his scythe chariots, ordered the cavalry on his left flank to extend, opening a gap in his own line.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 37.42.2-3; and Arr. *Anab.* 3.14.1-4 Note also Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 354.

²⁴⁸ Livy, 37.42.7-8 and 37.43.1-5; and Arr. *Anab.* 3.14.4-6 and 3.15.1-3 Appian’s account of the battle is slightly different and has Antiochus defeating the Roman reinforcements sent to aid the camp. This makes the parallels in Livy’s (Polybius’) account even more interesting. App. *Syr.* 36.185-86 See also Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 355-56.

²⁴⁹ Livy 37.43.6-11 and 37.44.1; and Arr. *Anab.* 3.13.3 and 3.15.3-6 Note also Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 356.

²⁵⁰ For the Romans, Livy’ text records 300 infantry and forty-nine cavalry killed, twenty-five of which were Eumenes’ men. Livy 37.44.2 For Alexander, Arrian recorded only 100 deaths and the loss of 1,000 horses. Arr. *Anab.* 3.15.6 Again, it is worth mentioning that the casualty figures, or the lack thereof, are likely exaggerations and should be handled carefully; however, for our purposes the figures do display another parallel. Also, note Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 356-57.

²⁵¹ Livy 37.45.9-19 and 42.50.6 Also, see Briscoe, *Commentary on Livy*, 360-62; and Errington, *The Dawn of Empire*, 178-79.

the mighty power of the East. Their victories established Alexander as the conqueror of Persia and the Romans as the new, undisputed hegemon of the Mediterranean world. Both events signaled a rise to supremacy as the ultimate power in their own respective times.

Livy's (and Polybius') account of the Battle of Magnesia mirrors the ancient descriptions of the Battle of Gaugamela, with which Polybius especially would have been familiar through his studies, in so many instances that it is difficult not to see the connection.²⁵² Through Livy's (and Polybius') description of the Roman victory at Magnesia, one can see Rome's maturation in its role of Alexander's true successor. The analogy made between these two battles has much to say about Livy's (and Polybius') respect for the accomplishments of Alexander and the belief in Rome's destiny.

The Lingering Reputation of Alexander

Another passage worth mentioning concerns King Perseus' dilemma of whether or not to wage war against the Romans. In 171 B.C.E., it looked as though another military clash between Rome and Macedon was inevitable. The Romans decided to mobilize for war and Perseus had to decide whether to sue for peace or risk everything in battle.²⁵³ In the Macedonian council, Livy emphasized Macedon as the last major power

²⁵² Whether this account of the Battle of Magnesia is accurate about the actual fight is debatable and difficult to argue. Since Livy based his account on Polybius' account, and though not necessarily a verbatim translation, there is room for inquiry. Additionally, Polybius's account was not firsthand information. Polybius likely spoke to eyewitnesses but was not present at the battle. Therefore, Polybius too had room for creativity. For the purposes of this study, the close connection between the Battle of Magnesia and the events of Gaugamela raises certain questions about the potential purpose of the writers, especially when paired with the theme of associating the Romans with Alexander.

²⁵³ Livy 42.48.1 and 42.50.8-10

left to challenge Roman supremacy.²⁵⁴ In 42.50.7, Livy relates, “There now remained only the kingdom of Macedonia near in situation [to Rome], and which might seem able, if anywhere the fortune of Rome should waver, to inspire its kings with the spirit of their forefathers.” There is a sense here of the might once wielded by the Macedonians under Philip II and Alexander. Conversely, there is an element of concern that the power of Macedon, built by Philip and Alexander, was still dangerous to Rome. This passage emphasizes the success of Philip II in making Macedon a regional power and Alexander in making Macedon a world power.

This point of view continues in another passage closely following and likely based on an original Polybian account as well.²⁵⁵ In this section, Perseus musters his army and after their drills addresses his troops about the upcoming war with Rome.²⁵⁶ Livy relates that Perseus called the Romans deceitful and told his men that they not only surpassed the Romans in skill and training, but also had better auxiliaries, better equipment, and were better supplied.²⁵⁷ Perseus then tells his soldiers that they must show the spirit of their ancestors. Livy records the following, “They [the soldiers] must have, too, the spirit which their ancestors had possessed, who, having subdued all Europe (*qui Europa omni domita*), had crossed to Asia and opened up with their arms a whole

²⁵⁴ Livy 42.50.7

²⁵⁵ Livy drew heavily on Polybius for his eastern accounts. Polybius’ original no longer survives because all that remains are the Constantinian excerpts from the *de legat. gent.* This passage is another example of where scholars consider Polybius a direct influence on Livy. As discussed earlier with the Battle of Magnesia description, since Livy used Polybius as his principal source, much of what we have argued for Livy in this study we can reflect onto Polybius as well. See Nissen, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Quellen*, 249, 254, and 341; and Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Vol. 3, 23.

²⁵⁶ Livy 42.52.1-6

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 42.52.7-11.

unknown world, and had not ceased their conquests, until, confined within the Red Sea [i.e. the Indian Ocean in these contexts], when nothing remained for them to conquer (*quod vincerent, defuerit*).”²⁵⁸ Livy’s text thus emphasizes the vastness of Alexander’s conquests, and it acknowledges the extent to which he pushed the conception of the known world. Again, Livy emphasizes his military vigor and the tremendous limits to which he could push his men. We should also keep in mind that Polybius and Livy considered that the Antigonids, including Perseus, were direct descendants of Alexander the Great, who all shared in the reputation of his house.²⁵⁹

Livy’s Claim of Roman Superiority through the Domination of the World once Ruled by Alexander

Alexander directly appears in Livy’s text again between the last two previously discussed passages. Here, Livy mentions Alexander in connection with King Perseus and his army. He reports that through the careful planning of his father, Philip V, Perseus was able to field 39,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry.²⁶⁰ Livy regarded this force as the largest Macedonian force ever assembled since Alexander.²⁶¹ In Livy’s digression, he argues that Alexander would have been able to cross to Italy with no more than 30,000 Macedonian

²⁵⁸ Livy 42.52.13-14 If this passage was indeed based on an original Polybian account, then the statement “having subdued all Europe” has interesting implications on Polybius’ passage 1.2, where he criticizes the limits of Macedon’s territory in Europe as “no more than a small fraction of the continent.”

²⁵⁹ F. W. Walbank, *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World: Essays and Reflections* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 130-36.

²⁶⁰ Livy 42.51.11

²⁶¹ *Ibid.* 42.52.11. Polybius (and Livy, who used Polybius as a source) did not here consider the armies of the Ptolemaic or Seleucid empires since their connections with the traditional Macedonian monarchy were limited. See Walbank, *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World*, 130-31.

infantry.²⁶² Furthermore, Livy emphasizes the great potential and large aspirations of Perseus by associating him and his army with Alexander.²⁶³ Conversely, Livy establishes the magnitude of Rome's future victory over Perseus by linking him and his army with Alexander. In the last three passages discussed, Livy associates Alexander and the greatness of Macedon under his leadership with Perseus, whom the Romans ultimately defeated, ending the Macedonian kingdom. Livy's text portrays Alexander as the architect of Macedon's rise to world prominence. It is clear that Livy had respect for this accomplishment. However, this greatness also is tied to the failure of Alexander's last successor.²⁶⁴ Again, we see the process of recognizing Alexander as great but preparing to characterize the Romans as greater. Throughout these passages, Livy portrays Rome's victory over Perseus at Pydna as a victory over Alexander's house, reputation, and legend.²⁶⁵

After the decisive Roman victory at the Battle of Pydna in 168 B.C.E., most of Macedonia surrendered to Rome and Perseus fled to Samothrace, where he soon surrendered.²⁶⁶ As Perseus' capture was a massive spectacle, Livy referred to him as the greatest prisoner of war ever held by the Romans.²⁶⁷ As seen in the previous illustrations, Livy associates Alexander with the fall of Perseus and the victory of Rome. Hence, Livy

²⁶² Livy 9.19.5

²⁶³ Polybius (and Livy) considered Perseus a descendant of Alexander. Therefore, the association is not surprising. Note Walbank, *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World*, 132-36.

²⁶⁴ See *ibid.* 135-36.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ Livy 44.45.5, 44.45.14, and 45.6.10

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 45.7.2.

states, “Perseus was the chief enemy, and not only his own reputation and that of his father, grandfather, and the rest to whom he was related by blood and stock made him a figure of universal interest, but the glory of Philip and Alexander the Great, who made the Macedonians masters of the world, shone upon him.”²⁶⁸

Again, Livy clearly respected the accomplishments of Alexander. At 45.7.4-5, Livy also depicts Aemilius Paulus as showing reverence toward Perseus because of the honor and legend of his house, stating:

Perseus entered the camp in mourning garb without a single attendant to make him more pitiable by sharing his misfortunes. His only companion was his son. Owing to the crowd who surrounded him he was unable to make any progress until the consul [Aemilius Paulus] sent his lictors to clear a passage for him to the headquarters tent. After asking the rest to keep their seats the consul went forward a few steps and held out his hand to the king as he entered, and when he was going to prostrate himself he raised him to his feet and would not allow him to embrace his knees as a suppliant. Once inside the tent, he bade him take his seat facing the members of the council.

Livy continues, “When the council had broken up, the custody of the king was entrusted to Q. Aelius. On that day he was invited to dine with the council, and every mark of honor was shown to him which could be shown to anyone in his position.”²⁶⁹ Livy thereby points to respect on the part of the Romans for Perseus and his house. Yet, it is the connection between Alexander and the end of his family line at the hands of the Romans that is of particular relevance. Livy represents Rome as the power that eliminated the state made great by Alexander. Livy presents Rome as becoming Alexander’s true successor after Magnesia; while at Pydna, Livy portrays the Romans as finally supplanting the great Macedonian.

²⁶⁸ Livy 45.7.3 See also Walbank, *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World*, 132-36.

²⁶⁹ Livy 45.8.7-8

Livy clearly articulates these points again as he concludes his discussion of the Third Macedonian War. He thoroughly emphasizes the tradition, experience, reputation, and former greatness of Macedon, as well as the magnitude and the finality of its end. Again, Livy's text offers Alexander's accomplishments praise for their magnitude. However, the larger point that he makes by praising the eminence of Macedon, is the glorious role of Rome in ending Macedonian power. Livy declares:

This was the end of the war between the Romans and Perseus, after four years of steady campaigning, and also *the end of a kingdom famed over a large part of Europe and all of Asia*. They reckoned Perseus as the twentieth after Caranus, who founded the kingdom. Perseus ascended the throne in the consulship of Quintus Fulvius and Lucius Manlius, and was recognized as king by the senate in the consulship of Marcus Junius and Aulus Manlius; his reign lasted eleven years. The Macedonian nation was of no great reputation until the time of Philip [II], son of Amyntas. Later, when it had proceeded to expand under him, it was still confined within the bounds of Europe, though embracing all Greece and part of Thrace and Illyricum. Thereafter it overflowed into Asia, and *Alexander, in the thirteen years of his reign, first brought under his sway all the well-nigh boundless empire that had belonged to the Persians, and then traversed Arabia and India, where the Indian Ocean embraces the uttermost ends of the earth. At that time the empire and name of the Macedonians was greatest on earth; thereafter at the death of Alexander it was torn into many kingdoms, as each leader snatched at resources for his own account, and its strength was dismembered; yet it endured for a hundred fifty years from the topmost pinnacle of its fortune to its final end.*²⁷⁰

Livy attempts to make several points in this passage. He contends that through the leadership of Philip II and Alexander, Macedon went from obscurity to world dominance in only a few decades. However, he couples this meteoric rise with a swift dismemberment of Macedon's power after Alexander's death. Similarly, Livy's history

²⁷⁰ Livy 45.9.2-7 (The italics are mine.) It was 155 years from the death of Alexander to the fall of Perseus. There is some debate among the sources as to how many Macedonian kings reigned on the throne and which one was the traditional founder of the kingdom. Justinus claimed Perseus as the thirtieth king. Just. 32.2.6 Eusebius recorded him as the thirty-ninth king. Euseb. (Schöne I, col. 242) For Herodotus, the founder of the kingdom was Perdikkas. Herod. 8.138 See also Alfred C. Schlesinger, trans., *Livy: The History of Rome Volume XIII Books 43-45* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 273 n.1.

emphasizes Rome's steady climb to hegemony under the sturdy guidance of the Roman Senate, despite drastic reverses. Livy makes these same arguments in the digression as well.²⁷¹ In this passage, Livy stresses the stupendous exploits of Alexander. However, by noting the speed of his conquests and the equally fast destruction of his empire following his death, Livy also possibly signals the irrelevance of Alexander's accomplishments as compared to those of Rome.²⁷² This passage illustrates the past grandeur of Macedon in order to emphasize the greatness of Rome's accomplishment.

Alexander Marches Through the Streets of Rome as a Captive

In our final passage, Livy continues his theme of attaching Alexander's name to Perseus' failure and hence underscoring the greatness of Rome. He relates that the soldiers of Aemilius Paulus, returning home after their decisive victory in the Third Macedonian War, expressed anger over his old-fashioned discipline and his perceived stinginess toward his troops.²⁷³ In response, they threatened to vote against Paulus' right to hold a triumph for his victory over Macedon.²⁷⁴ Livy's text records that Marcus Servilius made a lengthy speech against this notion. One of his main arguments for the triumph is that glory would be given to the Roman people if the army forced Perseus to walk as a captive in the procession. Marcus Servilius is said to have mentioned the triumphs held over Philip V and Antiochus III. Since Perseus was not only defeated but

²⁷¹ See Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 78.

²⁷² Spencer, *The Roman Alexander*, 49.

²⁷³ Livy 45.35.4-6

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 45.35.8-9. For a vivid account of the Roman Triumph, note Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

also captured, Servilius argued that it only made sense to celebrate this event.²⁷⁵ He emphasized that the display of Perseus, whom all recognized as a mighty king, was the greatest show of all.²⁷⁶

In addition to the king, Marcus Servilius also mentioned his two sons as a worthy sight for all of Rome. In 45.39.7, Livy relates the following, “Shall the captured king, Perseus, with his sons, *Philip and Alexander, bearers of such mighty names*, be withdrawn from the eager gaze of the state?”²⁷⁷ This passage refers to Alexander the Great directly, via the boys’ “mighty names.” Livy thus meant for this story to contribute to his theme, found throughout his larger work, of representing the Romans as superior to Alexander. Additionally, Perseus’ sons were symbols of the Roman domination over all of Macedon, from its rise to greatness to its fall.

Livy describing Philip and Alexander marching in defeat through the streets of Rome is also highly emblematic of Roman superiority. The symbol is significant, and the implied connection is clear. The young sons of the king carried a profound figurative and psychological message to the people of Rome and in Livy’s history. Livy’s text emphasizes this concept in detail and exaggerates it in his digression. Livy clearly here establishes the supremacy of Rome. The mighty power built by Philip II and Alexander

²⁷⁵ Livy 45.39.1

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 45.39.3.

²⁷⁷ *Perseus rex captus, Philippus et Alexander, filii regis, tanta nomina, subtrahentur civitatis oculis?* (The italics are mine.)

the Great was gone; the Macedonian sun had set.²⁷⁸ It was Rome that proved the greater state, and it was now Rome's responsibility and right to shape the world. Ultimately, the eagle of Rome replaced the lion of Alexander.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ One finds the symbol of the Vergina Sun, sometimes associated with the Kingdom of Macedon, on objects of art such as the "The Golden Larnax" found at the Vergina burial site and now housed in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. In recent years, tension between Greece and Macedonia has mired the symbol in controversy as the two countries battle over the right to use the symbol and include it as part of their national identities. See Loring M. Danforth, "Claims to Macedonian Identity: The Macedonian Question and the Breakup of Yugoslavia," *Anthropology Today*, 9, No. 4 (Aug., 1993), 10.

²⁷⁹ For Alexander's various associations with a lion, see Margarete Bieber, "The Portraits of Alexander," *Greece & Rome*, Second Series, 12, No. 2 (Oct., 1965), 183-88; Margarete Bieber, "The Portraits of Alexander the Great," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 93, No. 5 (Nov. 30, 1949), 380, 382, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 404, 423, 425, 426, and 427; and Alfred Emerson, "The Portraiture of Alexander the Great: A Terracotta Head in Munich (II)," *American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts*, 3, No. 3/4 (Dec., 1887), 11 n.44. During the Roman Republic, the eagle was one of five animal figures carried into battle by the army and eventually became the favored symbol. In 104 B.C.E., Marius adopted the eagle as the official symbol of the legion. Plin. *HN* 10.16 The eagle was a symbol of great significance for the Roman army and continued to be so for many centuries. Caes. *B Gall.* 4.25; Tac. *Ann.* 1.39; Cass. Dio, 40.18; Tert. *Apol.* 16.8; and Veg. *Mil.* 2.13, 3.5 Also, see Adrian K. Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2003), 47, 84, and 134; Pat Southern and Karen R. Dixon, *The Roman Late Army* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 126; Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 67, 87f., 178, 216, 224f., 229f., 232, 234; and Brian Campbell, *The Roman Army, 31 BC – AD 337: A Sourcebook* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 28, 31, 131-33.

Chapter V

How Livy's Digression on Alexander Fits into the Larger Narrative of His History

Discussing the Livian examples of Alexander the Great found outside of Livy's digression better allows us to situate his digression within the broader scope of his work. The digression cannot serve as the only point of reference when dealing with Livy's opinion of Alexander. The other passages mentioned in the previous sections, when we add them to the digression and take everything as a whole, create a more nuanced account of Livy's thoughts on Alexander and the role that Alexander plays in Livy's work. It is now time to turn our attention to Livy's digression on Alexander the Great's hypothetical invasion of Italy. First, we must examine why such a digression fits into Livy's larger narrative, and why the digression would have proved both understandable and appealing to his audience.

Scholars have long debated the exact purpose and relevance of the digression to Livy's larger narrative.²⁸⁰ Ruth Morello sees the debate as a divide between Anglophone and Continental scholars.²⁸¹ For many years, the Anglophone scholars, led by W. B. Anderson, believed the digression was a "long-winded," "irrelevant," and "juvenile"

²⁸⁰ For a standard bibliography on the critical approaches to Livy's digression, see Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 63 n.7.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.* 63-4.

showpiece that Livy later added into his text.²⁸² Yet, Oakley thoroughly rejects Anderson's arguments and states that few now follow this school of thought.²⁸³

Continental scholars, led by P. Treves, saw the digression as a significant element in the text and refocused the debate on what was the reasoning for the digression and where it was supposed to fit in the narrative trajectory that Livy was constructing for Roman history.²⁸⁴ We should note that whether the digression was an earlier rhetorical exercise (later inserted into the work by Livy) or a passionate response to the contemporary literary attacks made by Greek writers on the waning Roman military reputation of the mid to late first century B.C.E. (because of recent failures in the East), the digression still demonstrates the clear impact of Alexander on Livy's history, and his own interest in the Alexander topic.²⁸⁵ However, it is generally accepted that the digression was not a later insert, and that it adds to our understanding of the larger narrative, as we shall discuss below. The incorporation of Livy's digression into his larger narrative makes its relative importance and broad implications all the more effective.

Treves argued that the digression should have been placed in Book 8 and did not think that it had a link with Book 9, only surfacing there because Book 8 had been

²⁸² Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 63. Note also W. B. Anderson, "Contributions to the Study of the Ninth Book of Livy," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 39 (1908), 89-103; C. F. Walters and R. S. Conway, "Restorations and Emendations in Livy VI-X," *The Classical Quarterly* 12, No. 2 (Apr., 1918), 100; W. B. Anderson, *Livy Book 9* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 255-58; Salmon, *Samnum and the Samnites*, 228; and T. A. Dorey, ed., *Livy* (London: Routledge, 1971), 13.

²⁸³ Oakley, *Commentary III*, 194, 655-58.

²⁸⁴ Piero Treves led this change. See Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 64. Also, note P. Treves, *Il mito di Alessandro e la Roma d'Augusto* (Milan, 1953), 15.

²⁸⁵ For this Greek criticism, see Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 16.

published already.²⁸⁶ E. Burck, J. Lipovsky, and V. Santangelo put forth the idea that the digression was a post-Caudine Forks apologetic, established in order to distract the reader and cover up the Roman failure.²⁸⁷ Oakley views the placement of the digression as significant when read against the background of Roman recovery.²⁸⁸ He argues that the purpose of the digression was to emphasize Roman greatness and resilience.²⁸⁹

Others observe the digression as a Livian commentary on the dangers of one man rule, and as connected with contemporary events, possibly even criticizing Augustus.²⁹⁰ Oakley thinks that the digression may reflect contemporary events; but it is unclear which events.²⁹¹ By connecting his digression with contemporary events and people, however, Livy yet again associates the Romans with Alexander. Livy thus continues to utilize the great Macedonian as a figure of example, whose conduct further establishes right and wrong.

As noted previously, Morello relates that other scholars have preferred to see the digression as a response to recent Roman failures against Parthia and as an attack on

²⁸⁶ Treves argues that Livy published books 1-10 separately and suggests that Book 8, where he thought the digression belonged, had already been published by the time that Livy thought of creating the digression. Therefore, Treves argues that Livy placed the digression in Book 9. See Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 64; and Oakley, *Commentary III*, 193.

²⁸⁷ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 64. Note also J. Lipovsky, *A Historiographical Study of Livy Books VI-X* (Manchester, NH: Ayer Company Publishers, 1981), 141, 151; and E. Burck, *Vom Menschenbild in der römischen Literatur* (Heidelberg, 1966), 325-26.

²⁸⁸ Oakley, *Commentary III*, 196.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 197.

²⁹⁰ See Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 11; Spencer, *The Roman Alexander*, 44; Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 82-3; and Oakley, *Commentary III*, 192, 199.

²⁹¹ Oakley, *Commentary III*, 197.

Romanophobic Greeks.²⁹² R. M. Ogilvie put forth this idea earlier, arguing that the digression was Livy's attempt to respond to contemporary Roman criticism of apparent Roman weakness in the face of the Parthians.²⁹³ According to Ogilvie, in order to combat the recent humiliating defeats suffered by Rome at the hands of the Parthians, Livy wished to show that, ultimately, even "Alexander was no match for the rugged determination of the Romans."²⁹⁴ Thus, the placement of the digression "serves to highlight the theme of the first section of the *History* — how from humble beginnings Rome became a world power."²⁹⁵ It is not insignificant that Livy chose Alexander as his subject.

Morello appropriately argues that none of these interpretations is fully satisfying because they each are based on limited evidence and restrict what messages we can gather from Livy's work.²⁹⁶ Instead, she argues that "we have too rarely made a serious attempt to understand the digression as historiographically legitimate, as participating in debates inherited from Livy's predecessors, and as a vital contribution to the architecture of the second pentad. . . . The digression is densely allusive, both to Livy's own work and to that of his predecessors."²⁹⁷ With this, we can appreciate that the digression builds on many facets of Livy's earlier work.

²⁹² Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 64. See also J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 224; Erich S. Gruen, "Augustus and the Ideology of War and Peace," in *The Age of Augustus*, ed. R. Winkes (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1985), 70; and Oakley, *Commentary III*, 198.

²⁹³ Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 16. Note also Livy, 9.18.7

²⁹⁴ Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 17.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 65.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Livy connected part of his aim in this digression to the goals he established in the Preface for writing his history.²⁹⁸ Morello argues, “The digression encourages the reader, then, to think back to historiographical issues raised in the Preface [such as great men of the early period, stress on the perfection of the early military, and Roman society in general], and to consider the interaction between Livy’s text and those of two of his most influential predecessors [Cato and Ennius].”²⁹⁹ In addition, the digression builds upon the idea of Rome’s rise to greatness and the coming struggle with the other powers of the Mediterranean world found in passage 7.29.1-2.³⁰⁰ Livy meant for the digression to follow and expand upon the Papirian material found in Book 8, which introduces topics such as military discipline and the perpetuity of Rome’s authority.³⁰¹ In addition, as mentioned previously in this study, Livy also meant for Alexander of Epirus’ disastrous invasion of Italy to be a precursor to the digression.³⁰²

Morello’s article details six viable reasons for why Book 9 is the proper place for the digression: the counterfactual model of the digression works well when paired with the Caudine section; the digression emphasizes Roman resilience and inability to accept defeat; it further promotes Livy’s belief that success follows the harmonizing of the soldiers and the citizen body; it emphasizes the established theme of age over youth; Book 9 has already set up the topography that will feature in the digression; and the

²⁹⁸ Morello, “Livy’s Alexander Digression,” 67.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 69.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 70.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* 70-71.

³⁰² *Ibid.* 71-72.

attention paid to Papirius.³⁰³ Morello thus confirms Book 9 as the correct placement of Livy's digression.

The digression proves to have several motives behind it, and we should understand it as an integral part of Livy's greater history. It is fundamental in helping establish the greater themes and opinions that extend through the entire work. One of these themes is Livy's firm belief that Alexander was great, but the Romans were greater, the effects of which are far reaching and heavily clad in symbolism, as we saw in the previous sections.

A Roman Tradition of Alexander Counterfactual

With the position of the digression within the greater context of the narrative clarified and the reasons for Livy's inclusion of the digression established, we must now briefly discuss why Livy's Roman audience would have found the digression interesting and the message behind it surprising. Livy's digression is the most famous example from antiquity of counterfactual history.³⁰⁴ The counterfactual history found in Livy's digression thus was built into Roman thought early on and specifically associated with Alexander.³⁰⁵

We find possibly the earliest surviving recorded case in Plutarch's record of the speech of Appius Claudius Caecus, who in 280 B.C.E. railed against the possibilities of

³⁰³ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 72-4.

³⁰⁴ Oakley, *Commentary III*, 206.

³⁰⁵ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 65.

coming to peace terms with Pyrrhus after the Battle of Heraclea.³⁰⁶ Plutarch relates the scene as follows:

Then Appius raised himself up where he was and said: “Up to this time, O Romans, I have regarded the misfortune to my eyes as an affliction, but it now distresses me that I am not deaf as well as blind, that I might not hear the shameful resolutions and decrees of years which bring low the glory of Rome. For what becomes of the words that you are ever reiterating to all the world, namely, that if the great Alexander of renown had come to Italy and had come into conflict with us, when we were young men, and with our fathers, when they were in their prime, he would not now be celebrated as invincible, but would either have fled, or, perhaps, have fallen there, and so have left Rome more glorious still? Surely you are proving that this was boasting and empty bluster, since you are afraid of Chaonians and Molossians, who were ever the prey of the Macedonians, and you tremble before Pyrrhus, who has ever been a minister and servitor to one at least of Alexander's bodyguards, and now comes wandering over Italy, not so much to help the Greeks who dwell here, as to escape his enemies at home, promising to win for us the supremacy here with that army which could not avail to preserve for him a small portion of Macedonia.”³⁰⁷

It is possible that the Alexander reference was a fabrication created by Plutarch for rhetorical purposes; however, there is nothing intrinsically false about this reference and we should not dismiss its plausibility outright.³⁰⁸ Further, through both the counterfactual speculation and synkrisis on Alexander, plus the sources that Livy used (9.16.9: “Had Alexander the Great, after subjugating Asia, turned his attention to Europe, *there are many* who maintain that he would have met his match in Papirius”), Livy’s work

³⁰⁶ Morello, “Livy’s Alexander Digression,” 65-66.

³⁰⁷ Plut. *Pyrrh.* 19.1-2

³⁰⁸ Morello, “Livy’s Alexander Digression,” 65-66. For the argument that this inclusion of Alexander was a rhetorical commonplace used by Plutarch, see G. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 26-29. For the problems associated with dating and authenticating the passage, note O. Weippert, *Alexander-Imitatio und römischen Politik in Republikanischer Zeit* (diss. Augsburg, 1972), 10-17.

demonstrates that the tradition was already present and established by his period.³⁰⁹ It persisted well into Late Antiquity as well. Emperor Julian took part in this tradition in the fourth century C.E. and it continued into the fifth century C.E., as we shall discuss in greater detail below.³¹⁰

In addition, Morello establishes Alexander as a Roman favorite for rhetorical presentation.³¹¹ Oakley thus argues that Livy possibly based his digression on some such comparison found in his sources.³¹² Livy did not invent the debate of Alexander versus the Romans; rather, what he heard or read concerning Alexander influenced him.³¹³

Associations of Rome with Alexander and the Tradition

Livy's digression stands in contrast to the numerous examples of artwork adopted into Roman culture and politics, which were meant to tie the reputation of Alexander to the Romans in order to create a sense of kindred greatness.³¹⁴ It is significant that Livy selected Alexander as his counterfactual subject since this recognized Alexander's

³⁰⁹ See Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 66.

³¹⁰ Note Julian. *Ep.* no. 47, 433 C; and Oros. 3.15.10

³¹¹ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 66 n.22. Note also Sen. *Suas.* 1, 4; Plut. *De fort. Rom.* and Plut. *De Alex. fort.*

³¹² Oakley, *Commentary III*, 194.

³¹³ *Ibid.* 188.

³¹⁴ For the popularity of sculpture influenced by Alexander in Roman society, see Diana E. E. Kleiner, "Semblance and Storytelling in Augustan Rome," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, ed. Karl Galinsky (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203, 207, and 208; Mary T. Boatwright, Daniel J. Gargola, and Richard J. A. Talbert, *The Romans from Village to Empire: A History of Ancient Rome from Earliest Times to Constantine* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 290; Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage, *Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle Creek, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 81 and 142; and Erich S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome, Volume 1* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Ltd., 1984), 259. For the significance of the Alexander mosaic, note Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 28 n.13, 28-29, 37, 135, and 151; and Ramage and Ramage, *Roman Art*, 96 and 98.

position as the greatest conqueror of all time. When Livy states that “the power of Rome would not have been conquered by Alexander any more than by other kings and peoples,” he accomplishes two things. On the one hand, he isolates Alexander from all others and acknowledges the common belief of Alexander as the single most significant conqueror in history.³¹⁵ Yet on the other, he reduces Alexander to approximately the same level as “other kings and peoples,” in order to challenge the idea of his unrivalled superiority. Livy’s desire to promote Rome to the highest level led him to choose Alexander as the competitor. We should not overlook the significance of Livy’s mere attempt to create this digression, because it points directly to the lingering reputation of Alexander the Great on the new world power, Rome.

In his digression, Livy decided to create a hypothetical invasion of Italy by Alexander, at some time after his vast Asian conquests. To be sure, this is counterfactual history; however, there was a well established tradition of the threat of Alexander to Italy and his designs to wage war against the Romans. Several of our surviving texts address it in some form or fashion. I have listed them below in chronological order. We should notice how the message becomes more focused on a clash between Alexander and Rome the later the source.

In discussing the memoranda of Alexander’s orders produced by his general Perdicas after the king’s death, Diodorus Siculus is the first and weakest example. He records the following:

It was proposed to build a thousand warships, larger than triremes, in Phoenicia, Syria, Cilicia, and Cyprus for the campaign against the Carthaginians and the others who live along the coast of Libya and Iberia and the adjoining coastal region as far as Sicily; to make a road along the

³¹⁵ Livy 9.17.4

coast of Libya as far as the Pillars of Heracles and, as needed by so great an expedition, to construct ports and shipyards at suitable places.³¹⁶

Curtius Rufus, discussing the vast plans that Alexander held on his return to Persia, states:

Alexander himself, having embraced infinite plans in his mind, had determined, after thoroughly subduing the entire seacoast of the Orient, to cross from Syria to Africa, being incensed against the Carthaginians, then passing through the deserts of Numidia, to direct his course to Gades – for the report had spread abroad that the pillars of Heracles were there – then to visit Spain, which the Greeks called Hiberia from the river Hiberus, to approach and skirt the Alps and the seacoast of Italy, from which it is only a short voyage to Epirus.³¹⁷

In his history of Pyrrhus, Plutarch relates the speech of Appius Claudius Caecus, who, as stated previously, argued against coming to terms of peace with Pyrrus in 280 B.C.E., as follows:

“For what becomes of the words that you are ever reiterating to all the world, namely, that if the great Alexander of renown had come to Italy and had come into conflict with us, when we were young men, and with our fathers, when they were in their prime, he would not now be celebrated as invincible, but would either have fled, or, perhaps, have fallen there, and so have left Rome more glorious still? Surely you are proving that this was boasting and empty bluster, since you are afraid of Chaonians and Molossians, who were ever the prey of the Macedonians, and you tremble before Pyrrhus, who has ever been a minister and servitor to one at least of Alexander's bodyguards.”³¹⁸

In his account of the aftermath of Alexander's death, Arrian states that some writers “assert that he [Alexander] intended to go to Sicily and the Iapygian Cape [southern Italy], for the fame of the Romans spreading far and wide was already causing him

³¹⁶ Diod. 18.4.4

³¹⁷ Curt. 10.1.17-8

³¹⁸ As discussed previously, this is possibly our earliest surviving reference to the tradition. However, since Plutarch was a late first to early second century C.E. writer, I have included him in this order. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 19.1-2 (The italics are mine.)

concern.”³¹⁹ While Julian, writing against the Christians of Alexandria, argues, “Nay, Ptolemy son of Lagus proved stronger than the Jews, while Alexander, if he had had to match himself with the Romans, would have made even them fight hard for supremacy.”³²⁰ Moreover, in reprimanding Emperor Valentinian’s bloodthirsty investigations and lack of mercy, Ammianus Marcellinus uses Papirius Cursor as one of the fine examples he could have aspired to emulate, relating the following story:

A general of Praeneste in one of the Samnite wars had been ordered to hasten to his post, but had been slow to obey, and was summoned to expiate that misdeed; Papirius Cursor, who was dictator at the time, ordered the lictor to make ready his axe, and in sight of the man, who was overcome with terror and had given up hope of excusing himself, he gave orders that a bush seen near should be cut down, by a jest of this kind at the same time punishing and acquitting the man; and thereby he suffered no loss of respect, and he brought to an end the long and difficult wars of his fathers and was considered the only man capable of resisting Alexander the Great, if that king should have set foot on Italian soil.³²¹

In his brief discussion of the Second Samnite War, Orosius states, “Papirius enjoyed at that time a great reputation among the Romans for valor and energy in war; so much so that when Alexander the Great was reported to be arranging an expedition from the East to occupy Africa and thence to cross to Italy, the Romans considered Papirius the best fitted of all generals in the Republic to withstand his attack.”³²² Finally, Joannes Laurentius Lydus, who wrote in the sixth century C.E., recorded a similar story.³²³ This

³¹⁹ Arr. *Anab.* 7.1.3

³²⁰ Julian has a more optimistic assessment of Alexander’s chances against Rome, but does not quite say that he would win. Julian. *Ep.* no. 47, 433 C

³²¹ Amm. Marc. 30.8.5 Notice how this excerpt closely follows the tradition found in Livy 9.16.16-19.

³²² Oros. 3.15.10

³²³ Jo. Lyd. *Mag.* 1.38

tradition is significant for our understanding of the relationship between Roman thought and Alexander, since there is little evidence to suggest that it was contemporary with Alexander, and therefore was a creation of later Roman writers.³²⁴ The tradition not only attempted to represent Rome and Italy as areas of relative international importance in the late fourth century B.C.E. It also compared a young Roman state, which would rise to dominance in the Mediterranean world, favorably to the mightiest conqueror in all of history.

Later tradition had it that Alexander the Great, in a response to piratical activities in Italy, requested that Rome help eliminate such activities, appealing to a common kinship between Greeks and Romans.³²⁵ In another story about contact between Alexander and the Romans, Memnon recorded that the great king offered the Romans wise advice on how to deal with their enemies in Italy, and on the eve of the Persian expedition, supposedly received a gold crown from them.³²⁶ Pliny the Elder states that Cleitarchus recorded a Roman embassy to Alexander in Babylon.³²⁷ In discussing this last instance of alleged direct contact between Rome and Alexander, Erich Gruen observes, “The truth of that statement remains in dispute, sometimes categorically denied, sometimes ingenuously defended. For our purposes it suffices to observe that one

³²⁴ Gruen, *The Hellenistic World, Vol. 1*, 318.

³²⁵ Strabo, 5.3.5 (C232). Also, see Gruen, *The Hellenistic World, Vol. 1*, 318. One must mention that H. Dell thinks that this passage refers to the later Alexander II of Epirus. See Harry J. Dell, “The Origin and Nature of Illyrian Piracy,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (Jul., 1967), 355. However, Alexander II of Epirus ruled after Demetrius Poliorcetes and therefore he cannot be the Alexander referred to by Strabo.

³²⁶ Allegedly, Alexander told the Romans “they should either conquer others, if they were capable of ruling over them, or yield to those who were stronger than them.” Memnon, *FGH* 3B, 434 F 18.2 Also, note Gruen, *The Hellenistic World, Vol. 1*, 318.

³²⁷ Pliny *NH*, 3.57

contemporary historian of Alexander [Cleitarchus] saw fit to remark on (or invent) Romans dispatching a mission to the Macedonian monarch.”³²⁸ Thus, there seems to have been a tendency to associate Alexander with the Romans from an early date. Later writers continued and expanded this tradition. Additionally, the practice of establishing Alexander as a threat to Rome and discussing his plans to conquer Italy was an adaptation of this tradition.

Arrian and Curtius Rufus, who recorded Alexander’s possible plans to invade Italy, produced no accounts of direct Roman contact with Alexander. Nevertheless, these accounts aimed to accomplish the same goal, which was to create a connection between the present greatness of Alexander and the future greatness of Rome. This connection was recorded, (with Cleitarchus as the one possible exception), by later writers who had witnessed Rome’s rise. Gruen states, “The dramatic possibilities of encounter between the western power [Rome] and the greatest of Hellenic conquerors [Alexander] impressed themselves only upon writers of much later.”³²⁹ With that in mind, Cleitarchus’ story displayed Alexander as a political scientist or philosopher who was made to “inquire after the nature of Rome’s constitution, to comment on the demeanor and the independence of her representatives, and to predict her future greatness. Transparent inventions, all of it--- but not something a third-century [B.C.E.] writer would be moved to invent.”³³⁰ Thus, even Cleitarchus’ account followed in the tradition of connecting the known greatness of

³²⁸ Gruen, *The Hellenistic World, Vol. 1*, 318.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

Alexander with the future greatness of Rome. So, too, Cleitarchus' reasons for recording this event were different from those of the later writers.

Fictitious or not, the reference to Roman emissaries in Cleitarchus' work "constitutes but an incidental item in the registry of distant peoples come to pay respect to Alexander the Great. Rome as an intrinsic object of interest had not yet captured Hellenic fancy."³³¹ Cleitarchus may not have been attempting to associate Rome with the greatness of Alexander. Yet, later Roman and Greek writers were making a deliberate connection between Alexander and Rome. They continued a tradition that ran from the third century B.C.E. well into Late Antiquity.

This tradition allowed Romans, and those recording the rise of Rome to dominance, to portray Rome's international importance even early in its history. The connection was also important in helping establish Rome as a power worthy of following in Alexander's footsteps in its eventual ascendancy over the new world created by Alexander. With the advent of Alexander and his conquests, the old concept of *oikumenē*, which means "the inhabited world," took on a new meaning. Hence, Karl Galinsky states, "*Oikumenē* came to denote not only the changed geography, which included the Middle East and parts of Asia, but also its social, political, and ethnic dimensions. A cosmopolitan variety of peoples and cultures lived under the aegis of a ruling power."³³² Even though Alexander's death brought an end to this unified power under his successors, the concept of *oikumenē* persisted both culturally and physically. Political

³³¹ Gruen, *The Hellenistic World, Vol. 1*, 318.

³³² Karl Galinsky, "Vergil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as World Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, ed. Karl Galinsky (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 341.

reunification of this new world was also an idea that persevered. Galinsky continues, “Polybius commenced his *Histories* in the second century B.C. by reminding the Romans of this role, and Alexander the Great became the inspirational role model for subsequent Roman leaders.”³³³ The tradition of a connection between Alexander and the Romans is significant not only because it helped describe the rise of Rome as a new world power moving toward greatness, as we witnessed in Polybius’ work, but it also helped the Romans of Livy’s period to characterize their own successes via their alignment within the order of the greatest empires of history.

The connection was deliberate and has far-reaching implications. Rome became universally understood as Alexander’s true successor. However, Polybius’ and Livy’s works, and their adaptation of this tradition, use this connection to represent the Romans as surpassing the great accomplishments of Alexander. Their reasons for pursuing this line of thought, which often placed them in a position to make strained arguments and incorrect assertions, stemmed from an opinion, cultivated through the development of their works on the rise of Rome, that Alexander may have been great but the Romans were simply greater. Livy’s digression on Alexander is a fundamental example of the importance of Alexander’s connection to the Romans, as well as being a clearly pro-Roman discussion of that connection.

³³³ Galinsky, “Vergil’s *Aeneid* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as World Literature,” 341. See also Polyb. 1.1-3

Chapter VI

Livy's Digression on Alexander

With a solid understanding of how Alexander the Great features in Livy's work outside of the digression, an awareness of the historiographical context in which the digression is set, and an appreciation for how the digression would have been understood by Livy's Roman audience as a continuation of an already established tradition of significant interest, we shall now focus directly on the digression itself. This study has illustrated that Livy possessed a deep respect for the vast accomplishments of Alexander. Likewise, it has demonstrated that Livy's ultimate theme was to establish the Romans as superior to Alexander's greatness. No section in Livy's entire history advances this point more clearly than his digression.

It is important first to lay out the basic organization and argument of the digression. Livy argues that Alexander would have failed in his invasion and that his early death saved him from the wrath of Fortune.³³⁴ He then favorably compares Roman generals and the Roman state with Alexander.³³⁵ Livy next disparages the military ability of Alexander's historical enemies, comparing him to Darius III.³³⁶ Following this, Livy attacks Alexander's character and reputation.³³⁷ Livy then introduces his "one Alexander

³³⁴ Livy 9.17.4-6

³³⁵ *Ibid.* 9.17.7-15.

³³⁶ *Ibid.* 9.17.16 and 9.18.1-3.

³³⁷ *Ibid.* 9.18.4-11.

versus the many of Rome” theme.³³⁸ After this, he describes how Alexander’s eastern army would have been no match for Roman soldiers.³³⁹ Livy finishes the digression by emphasizing later Roman victories over the Macedonians.³⁴⁰

From its beginning to its conclusion, the digression is consistently hostile to the Macedonian king. The digression then continues in the rhetorical tradition of a *comparatio*, where someone compares two things and presents one as superior.³⁴¹ Thus, we must keep in mind that the digression, by its very nature, promoted a patriotic and radical stand on the part of Livy.³⁴² It is this vibrant eagerness to promote the greatness of Rome over that of Alexander that causes numerous oversights and exaggerations in the text. This of course makes the digression highly problematic even as “counterfactual history.” A thorough analysis of the digression will substantiate how comparisons with Alexander, because of his reputation and the respect that he commanded in the late Roman Republic, came to help determine the Romans’ view of Rome’s role in the world and even partially what it meant to be Roman.

After Livy portrays Lucius Papirius Cursor as a possible match for Alexander had he invaded Italy, he breaks away from his narrative and turns his attention to the digression.³⁴³ He prefaces the section with an apology for departing from the order of

³³⁸ Livy 9.18.12-19

³³⁹ *Ibid.* 9.19.1-13.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 9.19.14-17.

³⁴¹ Oakley, *Commentary III*, 188.

³⁴² Oakley suggests that Livy was impaired by patriotic or rhetorical enthusiasm. *Ibid.* 190.

³⁴³ Livy 9.16.19

events, which he admits was not his originally intention.³⁴⁴ To some, this statement has added to the triviality of the digression; but a greater sensitivity to the digression's various influences on Livy's history and the importance of Alexander in Livy's establishment of Roman superiority corroborates the significance of the digression.³⁴⁵

As previously noted, Livy explains that "the very mention of so great a king and commander evokes certain thoughts on which I have often brooded in silence, and disposes me to enquire how the Roman State would have fared in a war with Alexander."³⁴⁶ He here alludes to the previous section. Alexander and how his accomplishments compared to those of Rome were topics that interested the Romans. For Livy, who believed Rome was Alexander's true successor and a rival to his greatness, the digression was a necessary addition to his history.³⁴⁷ Morello's article impressively demonstrates the impact that the digression had on the preceding books of Livy's history, especially involving Alexander of Epirus and Lucius Papirius Cursor.³⁴⁸ However, this study has illustrated that the digression continues to influence our interpretation of passages in Livy all the way through to Book 45, the last extant book of his history. Ultimately, the digression stands as the primary example of Livy's consistent argument for Roman supremacy in greatness over all others, even Alexander. Arguably, Livy's opinions are often flawed. However, these flaws only illustrate that through the

³⁴⁴ Livy, 9.17.1 See also Oakley, *Commentary III*, 207-18.

³⁴⁵ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 62.

³⁴⁶ Livy, 9.17.2 The use of the multiple "Roman state" and the singular "Alexander" established in the beginning of the digression the "one versus many" theme. Oakley, *Commentary III*, 209.

³⁴⁷ Oakley argues that the use of "*tanti*" (so great) draws attention to the importance of Alexander, helping defend Livy's inclusion of the digression. See Oakley, *Commentary III*, 209.

³⁴⁸ Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 66-67 and 69-74.

digression, Livy thought he could definitively establish the Romans as superior to the great Macedonian.

Alexander the Lucky?

Livy begins his digression by recording the four factors he considered of chief importance in war: numbers, the valor of the soldiers, command ability, and above all Fortune.³⁴⁹ Livy believes that all of these elements favored the Romans and assured Roman invincibility.³⁵⁰ It is notable that Livy already refers to Alexander as invincible in war.³⁵¹ The contradiction is apparent. Still, the digression also implies that Livy thought that Alexander would have proved invincible up to the moment he invaded Italy and faced the Romans.

Livy recognizes Alexander as a masterful commander but faults him for his relatively youthful death, an issue that this study will address presently. Livy's text thus characterizes Alexander as unique; however, he portrays this uniqueness as negative.³⁵² Unlike Plutarch, who favored Alexander and compared his fortune favorably to the fortune of Rome, Livy used his digression in an attempt to establish Roman superiority in both fortune and virtue.³⁵³ Oakley also maintains that Greeks tended to champion

³⁴⁹ Livy 19.17.3 See also Oakley, *Commentary III*, 210-11.

³⁵⁰ Livy 19.17.4

³⁵¹ *Ibid.* 8.3.7.

³⁵² Livy emphasized the disadvantage of Alexander's uniqueness elsewhere as well (passages 9.17.14, 9.18.8, 9.18.18, and 9.19.12). Note Oakley, *Commentary III*, 191.

³⁵³ Plutarch thought that Alexander was great for his numerous virtues and his conquering of ill-fortune. For Plutarch, Alexander was still greater than the Romans, whom Plutarch saw as far more reliant on fortune for their success. Therefore, Plutarch stands in contrast to Polybius and Livy regarding Alexander. See Plut. *De Alex. fort.* and Plut. *De fort. Rom.* Also, see Oakley, *Commentary III*, 200-1.

Alexander over Rome and that Livy was responding to these Greeks.³⁵⁴ It is worth noting that this makes Polybius' stance in opposition to this trend even more significant.

In an attempt to argue that Alexander's premature death was a major benefit to his legend, Livy states, "I do not dispute that Alexander was an exceptional general, but his reputation is enhanced by the fact that he died while still young (*adulescens*) and before he had time to experience any change of fortune."³⁵⁵ Alexander was thirty-two when he died at Babylon in early June 323 B.C.E. His extensive military career began when he was eighteen. Therefore, to call him young, as if he was not already an experienced man, is inappropriate. To be sure, Alexander was not old by any means, but in the ancient world a thirty-two year old man who had been on almost continual campaign for nearly fifteen years should not be considered young.³⁵⁶ In addition, the idea that Fortune had not taken her cruel toll on Alexander is also misplaced. Even so, these arguments do attempt to diminish the supposed unrivalled greatness of Alexander.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Note Oakley, *Commentary III*, 202.

³⁵⁵ Livy 9.17.5

³⁵⁶ Livy's own work supports the idea of a man in his thirties as not young when Livy related Lucius Aemilius Paulus, the victor of the Battle of Pydna in 168 B.C.E., explaining to the defeated King Perseus of Macedon that had he been a "young man" when he received the throne Paulus would have been less surprised by Perseus' actions against the power of Rome. Livy 45.8.3-4 Perseus came to the Macedonian throne at the age of thirty-three years old in 179 B.C.E. following the death of Philip V. This was only one year older than Alexander at his death. Livy's desire to diminish Alexander in hope of advancing the Romans explains this contradiction.

³⁵⁷ Disasters both militarily and personally marred the last three years of Alexander's life. In 325 B.C.E., he lost a large portion of his army due to exhaustion and exposure crossing the Gedrosian Desert. Early in 324 B.C.E., Alexander lost his closest companion, Hephaestion, to fever. Finally, a little over a year later, Alexander succumbed to fever himself. For a mighty warrior who fought with glory in the front ranks alongside his men, who survived numerous serious wounds in multiple battles, who saw many of his friends die a celebrated death in combat, to finally succumb to a fever and instead die in his bed must have been one of Alexander's greatest regrets. A truly fortunate man, and especially a Macedonian king, would have lived much longer or have died a more glorious death.

The Sole Alexander versus the Multitude of Rome

Livy then described the multiple strong willed and militarily talented Roman commanders whom Alexander would have faced had he invaded Italy in this period. In this section, Livy argues for the superiority of the Roman generals through their discipline, tactics, and counsel.³⁵⁸ He portrayed the Roman generals as no less fortunate in war and as overcoming greater odds.³⁵⁹ In addition, he illustrated the Roman army as tactically superior to that of Macedon.³⁶⁰

The digression notes eleven Roman statesmen of the late fourth century B.C.E.³⁶¹ Livy boasts that these eleven men were all “gifted with the same qualities of courage and natural ability as Alexander.”³⁶² Livy went on to claim that these Roman statesmen would have matched Alexander in battlefield bravery and hand-to-hand combat ability. However, we must state that, of the eleven generals that Livy mentioned, three were too old to be of an age with Alexander and three were too young.³⁶³ This helps demonstrate the problems associated with Livy’s arguments in the digression.

³⁵⁸ Oakley, *Commentary III*, 186.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 187.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ Livy mentions, “M. Valerius Corvus, C. Marcus Rutilus, C. Sulpicius, T. Manlius Torquatus, Q. Publilius Philo, L. Papirius Cursor, Q. Fabius Maximus, the two Decii, L. Volumnius, and Manlius Curius.” Livy 9.17.8

³⁶² *Ibid.* 9.17.10.

³⁶³ See Oakley, *Commentary III*, 190.

Livy also made the argument that Alexander would have been no match for the Senate of Rome.³⁶⁴ He adopted a technique of Catonian historiography here by advancing the “one versus many” motif.³⁶⁵ Again, Livy contradicts himself, this time within the confines of the digression, at 9.18.12, when he urges fair one-on-one comparison.³⁶⁶ With Rome’s name at stake, Livy abandoned this belief and argued that “the collective ‘Roman name’ transcends all other Roman names, and outweighs that of Alexander, as Rome’s history outweighs his *magnitudo*.”³⁶⁷ Livy states,

However lofty our ideas of this man's [Alexander's] greatness, still it is the greatness of one individual, attained in a successful career of little more than ten years. Those who extol it on the ground that though Rome has never lost a war she has lost many battle, whilst Alexander has never fought a battle unsuccessfully, are not aware that they are comparing the actions of one individual, and he a youth, with the achievements of a people who have had 800 years of war.³⁶⁸

Livy’s text portrays Alexander as up against all of Rome. Livy thought that this discrepancy in numbers would prove too daunting.³⁶⁹ This comparison of Alexander with figures from the entirety of Roman history further connects the theme of claiming Roman

³⁶⁴ Livy 9.17.14 Oakley argues that this alludes to the resilience of the Roman Senate in the face of Pyrrhus after the Roman defeat at Heraclea in 280 B.C.E. If true, this further associates the failures of Pyrrhus with Alexander, as we saw earlier in this study. In addition, this implies the superiority of the Roman way of government over the Hellenistic kings of the East. See Oakley, *Commentary III*, 217-19.

³⁶⁵ Morello, “Livy’s Alexander Digression,” 69. Note also Cic. *Rep.* 2.2.1 for his discussion of how many men over numerous generations built the Roman Republic.

³⁶⁶ This is a glaring oversight by Livy. Morello, “Livy’s Alexander Digression,” 77. See also Oakley, *Commentary III*, 191.

³⁶⁷ Morello, “Livy’s Alexander Digression,” 77.

³⁶⁸ “*Quantalibet magnitudo hominis concipiatur animo; unius tamen ea magnitudo hominis erit collecta paulo plus decem annorum felicitate; quam qui eo extollunt quod populus Romanus etsi nullo bello multis tamen proeliis uictus sit, Alexandro nullius pugnae non secunda fortuna fuerit, non intellegunt se hominis res gestas, et eius iuuenis, cum populi iam octingentesimum bellantis annum rebus conferre.*” Livy 9.18.8-9

³⁶⁹ Morello, “Livy’s Alexander Digression,” 78. Note also Oakley, *Commentary III*, 192.

superiority to Alexander in the digression with those similar examples found elsewhere in Livy's extant work.

Additionally, when Livy depicts the Roman legion as superior to the Macedonian phalanx, like Polybius did, his text emphasizes the flexibility of the multiple sections of the legion as opposed to the alleged immobile and unified phalanx.³⁷⁰ Thus, Alexander and his army were no match for a multifaceted Rome on a whole variety of levels. In discussing Polybius 18.32 previously, we already addressed the distortion of this comparison. In this passage, Livy clearly portrays his own people as better than Alexander, and makes a similar distorted comparison.

Eastern Inferiority?

At several points in the digression, Livy made it a point to downplay Alexander's vast conquests by attacking the military power of those he conquered. He refers to the Persian King Darius III as "easy prey rather than an enemy."³⁷¹ There is no mention of the immense armies commanded by Darius, nor does Livy seem to have appreciated here that Alexander was outnumbered significantly at Issus and Gaugamela.³⁷² Livy immediately followed by referring to India as a less daunting obstacle to conquer than

³⁷⁰ Livy, 9.19.8 Note also Morello, "Livy's Alexander Digression," 78; and Oakley, *Commentary III*, 252.

³⁷¹ Livy 9.17.16

³⁷² At Issus and Gaugamela Darius outnumbered Alexander at least two to one. See Carey, *Warfare in the Ancient World*, 71, 76; and Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World*, 80-81.

Italy.³⁷³ However, the sheer difference in size between southern Italy and Pakistan seems to refute this claim.³⁷⁴

Alexander was forced to traverse mountains, deserts, large rivers, and jungle in northern Pakistan, while constantly battling hostile tribes.³⁷⁵ One also could argue that until Alexander neared Campania there would have been little, if any, military resistance by the tribes and cities of southern Italy because of their hostility toward Rome at the time when he would have arrived. Indeed, Alexander would have arrived at a time when Rome was a limited central Italian power surrounded by vicious enemies who more than likely would have willingly aided Alexander in a war against Rome or at the very least would have remained hostilely neutral to Rome. Alexander of Epirus, who was Alexander's uncle, Pyrrhus, and Hannibal all found willing allies in southern Italy to combat Rome. Livy's account of Publius Sulpicius' war proposal speech against Philip V in 200 B.C.E. speaks about the various southern Italian peoples that willingly joined Pyrrhus and Hannibal. Sulpicius argued that these same people would be willing to join Philip V if that king should invade Italy.³⁷⁶

³⁷³ Livy 9.17.17

³⁷⁴ A straight measurement from Malakwāl in central northern Pakistan, a town near the site of the Battle of the Hydaspes River, to Keti Bandar in southern Pakistan, a town in the Indus River delta near where the river meets the ocean, is just over 675 miles. One must stress that this measurement does not even account for Alexander's march into Pakistan from Afghanistan or the various movements back and forth across the major rivers of the Punjab. The major rivers of the Punjab, which Alexander faced, were the Jhelum, the Chinab, the Ravi, and the Beas. Including the march from Jalalabad, Afghanistan to the Hydaspes River battle site (about 225 miles) and the march from the battlefield to the River Beas and back (again about 225 miles), Alexander's army easily covered over 1,000 miles during the campaign in India. Conversely, a straight measurement from Tarentum (modern day Taranto) on the heel of Italy to the center of Rome is only about 260 miles, well under half the distance from just Malakwāl to Keti Bandar.

³⁷⁵ Note Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, 382-425.

³⁷⁶ See Livy 31.7.10-12

Demonstrated by the freedom and speed of movement enjoyed by Pyrrhus during the Pyrrhic War and Hannibal during the Second Punic War, southern Italy does not offer many daunting obstacles to the march of large armies. In fact, both commanders had the opportunity to besiege Rome during their campaigns.³⁷⁷ Livy relates the famous quote of Maharbal, Hannibal's cavalry commander, as follows, "Then said Maharbal, 'In very truth the gods bestow not on the same man all their gifts; you know how to gain a victory, Hannibal: you know not how to use one.' That day's delay is generally believed to have saved the City and the empire."³⁷⁸ Until an enemy army approached the Monte Cassino region of Campania, the natural obstacles of southern Italy would not have proved as intimidating as Livy argues.³⁷⁹ On paper, Italy south of Rome does not appear more daunting than the whole Indus River valley; however, much like Polybius' attempts to depreciate the territorial gains of Alexander in favor of Roman conquests (1.2), Livy challenged the achievements of Alexander in order to make them more comparable with those of Rome.

Livy then refers to any Persian or Indian troops that Alexander could have called upon to aid in his Italian invasion as more of "an encumbrance to drag around with him

³⁷⁷ Pyrrhus came within six miles of Rome before turning back. Champion, *Pyrrhus of Epirus*, 76. After his crushing victory at Cannae in 216 B.C.E., the path to Rome was wide open for Hannibal. He decided against an assault on the city and moved into southern Italy. Livy 2.51.4 and 23.1.1 Also, see Serge Lancel, *Hannibal*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1999), 109; John Prevas, *Hannibal Crosses the Alps: The Invasion of Italy and the Punic Wars* (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 1998), 206-8; and Brian Caven, *The Punic Wars* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, 1980), 140-41.

³⁷⁸ Livy 2.51.4

³⁷⁹ Livy's text refers to the passes of Apulia and the mountains of Lucania. Yet, neither Pyrrhus nor Hannibal found either area of mountains a great challenge to navigate. These were not Roman strongholds or insurmountable barriers. Livy also made mention of Alexander of Epirus' destruction; however, this is unfair since Livy himself noted that Alexander of Epirus was doomed by poor weather, not the terrain. *Ibid.* 8.24.5-9.

than a help.”³⁸⁰ Livy remarks that after getting a taste of Roman arms in battle, “Alexander would have wished to confront Persians and Indians and unwarlike Asians, and would have admitted he had hitherto been at war with women, as Alexander, King of Epirus, is reported to have said when mortally wounded, contrasting the type of war waged by this very youth [Alexander the Great] in Asia, with that which had fallen to his own share.”³⁸¹ By this charged remark, it is quite obvious that Livy had little respect for easterners and their previously attested lack of military prowess; however, these statements are highly prejudice and generally ill-founded.³⁸²

The crushing defeat of M. Licinius Crassus at the Battle of Carrhae in 53 B.C.E. by a smaller, lighter, and swifter Parthian army is a clear example of the might of eastern arms.³⁸³ The triumvir Marcus Antonius also suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of

³⁸⁰ Livy 9.19.5

³⁸¹ *Ibid.* 9.19.11-12. Aulus Gellius made a similar remark. Gell. *NA* 17.21.33 Oakley argues that this alleged saying of Alexander of Epirus is suspect since the motives for Roman invention of it were strong. Also, apparent in the quote are widespread ancient notions that easterners were effeminate and that climate influenced character. See Oakley, *Commentary III*, 255-6.

³⁸² It is possible that the more heavily armored and better disciplined Roman legion would have found the lightly armed foot-soldiers of the East as a less than equal opponent. However, there are two glaring deficiencies in Livy’s position. One, he completely ignored the considerable disadvantage the Romans would have faced in cavalry. Two, he failed to appreciate the recent damage done by eastern armies to the more professionalized Roman army of his own era. In fact, Livy’s account demonstrates a clear ignorance of the fact that Alexander’s strength rested in his cavalry. See *Ibid.* 190.

³⁸³ For Crassus’ defeat at Carrhae and the disadvantages that the Roman army faced against the Parthians, see Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 90, 137, 138, 148-49; George Rawlinson, *The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World, Vol. 3* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), 90-91; B.A. Marshall, *Crassus: a Political Biography* (Amsterdam, 1976), 143-61; App. *B.C.* 2.18; Flor. 1.46.2-3, 10; Plut. *Crass.* 16.1-2, 17.8-9, 19.4-8, 20.1-3, 23.1, 23.8-9, 24.3, 25.5, 26.2-4, 27.1-2, 27.5-6, 29.2-6, 30.5, 31.4, 31.6-7, and 32.1-2; Vell. Pat. 2.46.2, 4; Cass. Dio 40.12.1, 40.13.4, 40.17.3-19.3, 40.20.3, 40.27.3, 40.22.4, 40.23.4, and 40.25.4; Cic. *Div.* 2.84; Plin. *HN*, 15.83 and 2.147; Val. Max. 1.6.11; Joseph. *A.J.* 14.105-9; and Joseph. *B.J.* 1.179; Sen. *Contr.* 2.1.7; Luc. 8.394 ff.; and Ov. *A.A.* 1.180.

the Parthians in 36 B.C.E.³⁸⁴ Augustus, who brought numerous territories and peoples under the Roman yoke during his reign, made no major military attempts against the Parthians and established a peaceful relationship that lasted until the reign of Nero.³⁸⁵ Perhaps Augustus did not share Livy's contempt for the military prowess of easterners. The powers of the East proved a difficult challenge for Rome. Rome's multiple failures over the course of its history to conquer the East only make Alexander's accomplishments all the more impressive. However, by arguing for the weakness of Alexander's enemies and emphasizing the strength of Rome's military might, we see Livy seeking to establish Roman superiority over Alexander.

The Old Alexander as Darius III and Rome as a Young Alexander

One of the most striking segments of the digression is where Livy attacks Alexander by arguing that by the time Alexander had been able to attack Italy, "he would have been more like Darius than Alexander . . . leading an army which had already forgotten its Macedonian origins and was adopting degenerate Persian habits."³⁸⁶ Clearly, Livy thought that prolonged exposure to the East had a corrupting influence. Livy also argued that even the warlike Macedonians experienced this transformation. However,

³⁸⁴ Antony made it as far as Phraaspa, the Median Capitol, before he was forced to retreat due to the loss of his siege equipment. Over the course of the retreat, he lost over 32,000 men, one third of his army. Far from becoming the next Alexander or avenging the defeat at Carrhae, Antony lost more men than Crassus. For Antony's failed campaign, see Eleanor Goltz Huzar, *Mark Antony: A Biography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 176-80; and Plut. *Ant.* 37.1-52.2

³⁸⁵ In the early Principate, the Romans and Parthians came to quarrel over who claimed hegemony over Armenia; however, open war was avoided until Nero sent Gn. Domitius Corbulo to the East to conduct military operations in 55 C.E. See H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 BC to AD 68* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 246-49, 272, 278, 286, 297, and 314-15.

³⁸⁶ Livy 9.18.3 Thus Alexander became Darius. This idea looks back to passage 9.17.16. See also Oakley, *Commentary III*, 224.

Oakley correctly emphasizes the Macedonian resistance to Alexander's attempts at easternizing.³⁸⁷ Livy here makes a vague and unfair assumption.

Additionally, Alexander's army never became a foreign mass of various Persian and barbaric warriors. Alexander trained many of his new eastern subjects in the Macedonian fighting style with Macedonian equipment.³⁸⁸ Even at the end of Alexander's eastern conquests, the core of his army was the Macedonian phalanx, which Livy himself described as "unconquered on level ground and in a regular battle."³⁸⁹ In addition, Livy immediately contradicts his above assertion in the following section, stating, "He himself [Alexander] would have crossed the sea with veteran Macedonians to the number of not more than thirty thousand foot and four thousand horse - mostly Thessalians - for this was his main strength."³⁹⁰ This would not have been an insignificant Macedonian force, and it would have rivaled closely the army Alexander took into Asia Minor in 334 B.C.E.³⁹¹ However, for our purposes, by making these oversights, Livy likened the easternized Alexander to Darius.

We should remember Livy's account of the eastern army led by Antiochus, and the Roman victory over him at Magnesia, which parallels Alexander's victory over Darius at Gaugamela.³⁹² Just as the Romans had crushed Antiochus at Magnesia, this

³⁸⁷ Oakley, *Commentary III*, 224-25. Note also Arr. *Anab.* 7.6.5

³⁸⁸ Arr. *Anab.* 7.6.1; Diod. 17.108.1-3; Plut. *Alex.* 47.3, 71.1; Curt. 8.5.1; and Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, 371-72, 446-47.

³⁸⁹ Livy 33.4.3

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 9.19.5.

³⁹¹ Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, 158. See also Oakley, *Commentary III*, 249-50.

³⁹² Livy 37.37-44; and Arr. *Anab.* 3.8-16

Persian-influenced Alexander would have failed in Italy. Again, we see Livy relating Rome's enemies to Darius. In addition, by equating the older "degenerate" Alexander to Darius, Livy's text equates the Romans to the younger invincible Alexander. Thus, in this passage, even though Livy has a flawed argument, he emphasizes Rome as both the new Alexander and the great king's superior.

Livy's Hostility toward Easterners in the Digression

There were at least two underlying motives for Livy's attacks on easterners and Alexander. First, Livy's digression emphasizes the alleged traditional shortcomings equated with Alexander the Great, while at the same time ignoring or downplaying his military accomplishments so as to decrease the apparent greatness of Alexander to a level more obtainable for the fourth century Romans. Second, the events of Livy's own day called for a deprecation of eastern peoples and a need to defend Rome.³⁹³ Ogilvie emphasizes this point, stating, "Contemporary Greek historians were at this time comparing the Romans unfavorably with the Parthians."³⁹⁴ Livy thus was attempting to establish "the superiority of the Romans in the face of all comers."³⁹⁵ Livy's contempt for easterners led him to make a strained attack on Alexander.

Even though the digression is continually hostile to Alexander, the fact that Alexander was the focus illustrates that Livy had a respect for Alexander's military

³⁹³ Livy, recording Alexander's vices, states, "It is painful, in speaking of so great a king, to recite his ostentatious change of dress; his requiring that people should address him with adulation, prostrating themselves on the ground, a practice insupportable to the Macedonians, had they even been conquered, much more so when they were victorious; the shocking cruelty of his punishments; his murdering his friends in the midst of feasting and wine; with the folly of his fiction respecting his birth." Livy 9.18.4-5 See also Oakley, *Commentary III*, 225-29.

³⁹⁴ Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 16. Note also Livy 9.18.7

³⁹⁵ Ogilvie, *Livy: Rome and Italy, Books VI-X*, 16.

reputation. We know this already, of course, from the depictions of Alexander outside of the digression, where Livy even described him as invincible.³⁹⁶ The digression alone, just as with Polybius' negative opinion of Alexander's sack of Thebes, cannot determine Livy's overall opinion of Alexander. This we discover after looking at all of the examples found throughout the history.

Roman Military Superiority over Macedon

In a further attempt to demonstrate Roman dominance over Macedonian arms, Livy makes another deceptive statement: "The Romans have indeed had experience of the Macedonians in war, admittedly not when they were led by Alexander and their fortunes still stood high, but in the Roman campaigns against Antiochus, Philip, and Perseus, and not only without any defeat but even without danger to themselves."³⁹⁷ To begin with, this is incorrect since Philip's Macedonian phalanx defeated the Romans in 198 B.C.E. at Atrax.³⁹⁸ In addition, it is surprising that Livy would even bother to make such a statement since it possesses little to no relevance on the topic of a hypothetical invasion by Alexander the Great. Simply because a much stronger Roman state came to dominate the weaker Successor kingdoms in the second century B.C.E. would not automatically predict the guaranteed success of a weaker Rome over Alexander the Great himself in the late fourth century B.C.E.

³⁹⁶ Livy 8.3.7

³⁹⁷ Ibid. 9.19.14. As Oakley states, one can read this passage in comparison with Plut. *Flam.* 7.5, where Macedon's association with Alexander makes the Roman conquest significant. See Oakley, *Commentary III*, 257. However, one also can contrast it with Livy 45.39 for similar reasons, as discussed previously in this study.

³⁹⁸ Livy clearly oversimplified Roman success against the phalanx. See Oakley, *Commentary III*, 190. Also, note Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 202.

There is a parallel in thought here with Polybius 18.31-2, where all the Macedonians are lumped together and he minimizes the difference between the Macedon of Alexander and of Perseus. The only purpose that the above boastful statement about Rome's invincibility serves is to continue claiming the superiority of Roman arms to those of Alexander's successors. The message comes full circle when Livy concludes, "But they [the Romans] have defeated, and will defeat, a thousand armies more formidable than those of Alexander and the Macedonians, provided that the same love of peace and solicitude about domestic harmony, in which we now live, continue permanent."³⁹⁹ Livy's bluster here makes plain his belief in Roman superiority.

Final Thoughts on the Digression

Livy's digression is the prime example of his theme of representing the Romans as greater than Alexander. Yet, it is not the entire story: the theme appears subtly elsewhere. Additionally, in the digression Livy fails to grasp the political and temporal realities of the late fourth century B.C.E. Mediterranean world. Livy fails to understand that Alexander, if he had survived his illness, would have made his hypothetical invasion prior to the Roman dominance of all of Italy, or even all of central Italy. The use of strained arguments by Livy in order to assert why Alexander would have failed is noticeable. Livy's approach is sloppy, biased, and unsupported by good evidence. It is a clear example of propaganda.

Once we include all the Alexander passages in the discussion, it becomes clear that Livy respected Alexander as a great warrior but, much like Polybius, Rome to him was ultimately greater. Livy was willing to undervalue Alexander and his conquest when

³⁹⁹ Livy 9.19.17

faced with comparing the great Macedonian with his own people. In fact, he was forced to do this in order to make the fourth century B.C.E. Romans a possible match for Alexander and even superior to him. The inferiority complex of the Romans with regard to Alexander the Great and his accomplishments plays a role here. The digression, although misleading and unfair, serves this purpose. Additionally, for this study, it further develops Livian themes found in his passages on Alexander outside of the digression.

Chapter VII

General Conclusion

The continual impact of Alexander the Great on the issues that the ancients thought were important in history and on their interpretation of Roman history is undeniable. Alexander highly influenced Greek and Roman culture, literature, and art. It is no coincidence that many great Roman statesmen respected the illustrious Macedonian's accomplishments, and it should come as no surprise that numerous ancients dealt with the impact of Alexander the Great in their thinking and writing. This study has discussed the influence of Alexander on the histories of Polybius and Livy. This study also has endeavored to establish a more careful and nuanced consideration of Polybius' and Livy's attitudes toward Alexander, which the majority of modern scholarship tends to under-appreciate. It illustrates clearly that Alexander's influence on the writings of Polybius and Livy was important to their methods of writing and functional to their ideology.

What is clear from examining the Alexander passages found in the histories of Polybius and Livy is that they both possessed generally positive opinions of the great Macedonian. However, we should not consider either writer as a sycophant or an Alexander apologist. Polybius' criticism of Alexander's sack of Thebes and Livy's attacks on the "older, degenerate" Alexander in his digression makes this clear. A complete study of their works produces a full, balanced account of their opinions, which one cannot consider as generally negative. Both men consistently showed respect for Alexander's military vigor and skill, and his vast accomplishments. Their comparisons of

Rome with Alexander exist because of this respect for his greatness. The issue is not whether Polybius and Livy disliked Alexander and why; rather, it is why they believed the Romans were the greatest power of all time and how they utilized Alexander to portray this theme.

Polybius and Livy obviously were not the only writers who felt a need to address Alexander in their work. Yet, what makes Polybius' and Livy's accounts interesting is that, unlike the examples of emulation, apologetics, and consistent praise found in many ancient sources, these two writers addressed the impact of Alexander in a different and sometimes less flattering manner. They wrestled with their divided personal feelings on Alexander, the mighty conqueror, and Alexander, the potential rival of Rome. These histories offer a fascinating twist on the kind of influence Alexander's spirit and image imposed on the tradition of Roman history. A main reason for this different perspective on Alexander is the confines within which Polybius and Livy were writing, namely the history of Rome's rise to dominance in the ancient Mediterranean world and Rome's conquest of the Hellenic world created by Alexander.⁴⁰⁰ Polybius and Livy used Alexander and his image as a role model for military ability, as a warning against the corruption of success, and as a rival interchangeably. Polybius and Livy altered Alexander to suit whatever context and whatever theme they wished to portray.

As illustrated in this study, in both Polybius' and Livy's works this desire to represent the Romans as superior to Alexander led to shortsighted logic in arguments and the manipulation of detail in some of the Alexander passages. Contesting the greatness of Alexander does not come easily. In many instances, Polybius and Livy produced flawed arguments for Roman superiority. All the same, the passages in these two ancient

⁴⁰⁰ Polybius and Livy subordinate Alexander under the rise of Rome.

accounts involving Alexander and his Macedonians in conflict with the Romans are an important and underappreciated aspect of their histories.

This study strove to accomplish five primary goals: to produce a distinctive commentary on the various passages found in Polybius' and Livy's histories where they either directly mention Alexander or where we can infer an Alexander reference from the contexts; to establish the overall positive opinions of Alexander held by these two writers; to illustrate that an important theme of their works was the comparison between Alexander and Rome; to demonstrate that Polybius and Livy thought that the Romans were superior even to Alexander; and finally to create an understanding of how this motif influenced their larger narratives and alters our appreciation of their works. This author hopes that these goals were accomplished and that this study will spark controversy and conversation about our previously held ideas of the purpose of Alexander in the histories of Polybius and Livy, such as the alleged negative opinion of Alexander held by Polybius and the fundamental purpose of Livy's digression within his larger narrative. The efforts of Polybius and Livy to challenge the unrivalled greatness of Alexander in the favor of Rome, which (as Alexander's true successor) had come to dominate the world left behind by this mighty warrior, helps to represent further the great king's immense and unrivaled impact on a Roman world that ultimately lived in the shadow of Alexander the Great.

Bibliography

Sources

Ael. Tact.	Aelianus Tacticus (Greek military writer, ca. 110 C.E.)
Amm. Marc.	Ammianus Marcellinus (Roman soldier and historian, ca. 390 C.E.)
App. <i>B Civ.</i>	Appian (historian, ca. 130 C.E.), <i>Civil Wars</i>
App. <i>Syr.</i>	Appian, <i>Syrian Wars</i>
Arr. <i>Anab.</i>	Arrian (Roman statesman, general, and Greek historian, ca. 140 C.E.), <i>The Campaigns of Alexander</i>
Arr. <i>Tact.</i>	Arrian, <i>Tactica</i>
Asclep. <i>Tact.</i>	Asclepiodotus (Greek philosopher and writer, ca. 70 B.C.E.), <i>Tactica</i>
Caes. <i>B Gall.</i>	C. Julius Caesar (Roman general, statesman, and writer, ca. 50 B.C.E.), <i>The Gallic War</i>
Cass. Dio	Cassius Dio (Roman statesman and historian, ca. 210 C.E.)
Cic. <i>De Div.</i>	M. Tullius Cicero (Roman orator and statesman, ca. 55 B.C.E.), <i>Concerning Divination</i>
Cic. <i>De Fin.</i>	Cicero, <i>On the Ends of Good and Evil</i>
Cic. <i>De Rep.</i>	Cicero, <i>On the Commonwealth</i> (written ca. 25 B.C.E.)
Curt.	Q. Curtius Rufus (Roman historian during the Principate)
Dem. <i>First Philippic</i>	Demosthenes (Athenian orator and statesman, ca. 340 B.C.E.), <i>Speeches against Philip</i>
Dem. <i>Second Philippic</i>	Demosthenes, <i>Speeches against Philip</i>
Dem. <i>Third Philippic</i>	Demosthenes, <i>Speeches against Philip</i>

Diod.	Diodorus Siculus (Greek historian, ca. 30 B.C.E.)
Euseb. <i>Chron.</i>	Eusebius of Caesarea (Church leader and historian, ca. 325 C.E.), <i>The Chronicle</i>
Flor.	L. Annaeus Florus (Roman historian, ca. 120 C.E.)
Front. <i>Str.</i>	Sex. Julius Frontinus (Roman general and military writer, ca. 75 C.E.), <i>Strategems</i>
Gell. <i>NA</i>	Aulus Gellius (Roman writer and grammarian, ca. 170 C.E.), <i>Attic Nights</i>
Hdt.	Herodotus (Greek historian, ca. 430 B.C.E.)
Jo. Lyd. <i>Mag.</i>	Joannes Lydus (Byzantine statesman and writer, ca. 560 C.E.), <i>On the Magistrates of the Roman Commonwealth</i>
Joseph. <i>A.J.</i>	T. Flavius Josephus (Romano-Jewish historian, ca. 95 C.E.), <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
Joseph. <i>B.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>The Jewish War</i> (written ca. 75 C.E.)
Julian. <i>Caes.</i>	F. Claudius Julianus (Roman emperor, philosopher, and writer, ca. 360 C.E.), <i>The Caesars</i>
Julian. <i>Ep.</i> no. 47	Julianus, <i>Letters</i>
Just. <i>Trogus)</i>	Justinus (Roman historian, ca. 390 C.E.), <i>Epitome (of Trogus)</i>
Livy	T. Livius (Roman historian, ca. 15 B.C.E.)
Livy <i>Per.</i>	Livius, <i>Periochae</i>
Luc.	M. Annaeus Lucan (Roman poet, ca. 60 C.E.)
Memnon <i>FGH</i> 3B	Memnon of Heraclea (Greek historian, ca. 45 B.C.E.)
Oros.	Paulus Orosius (Christian historian, ca. 415 C.E.)
Ov. <i>Ars am</i>	Ovid (Roman poet, ca. 5 C.E.), <i>The Art of Love</i>
Plin. <i>HN</i>	Pliny the Elder (Roman statesman and scientist, ca. 70 C.E.), <i>Natural History</i>

Plut. <i>Alex.</i>	Plutarch (Greek biographer and essayist, ca. 110 C.E.), <i>Life of Alexander</i>
Plut. <i>Ant.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Antony</i>
Plut. <i>Crass.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Crassus</i>
Plut. <i>De Alex. fort.</i>	Plutarch, <i>On the Fortune of Alexander</i>
Plut. <i>De fort. Rom.</i>	Plutarch, <i>On the Fortune of the Romans</i>
Plut. <i>Flam.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Flaminius</i>
Plut. <i>Pyrrh.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Pyrrhus</i>
Polyb.	Polybius (Greek statesman and historian, ca. 150 B.C.E.)
Sen. <i>Contr.</i>	Seneca the Elder (Roman rhetorician and writer, ca. 30 C.E.), <i>Controversiae</i>
Sen. <i>Suas.</i>	Seneca, <i>Suasoriae</i>
Strabo	Strabo (Greek historian, geographer, and philosopher, ca. 10 B.C.E.)
Tac. <i>Ann. Annals</i>	P. Cornelius Tacitus (Roman historian, ca. 110 C.E.),
Tert. <i>Apol.</i>	Tertullian (Christian writer, ca. 200 C.E.), <i>The Apology</i>
Val. Max. C.E.)	Valerius Maximus (Roman rhetorician and writer, ca. 30 C.E.)
Veg. <i>Mil.</i>	Vegetius (Roman military writer, ca. 390 C.E.), <i>Concerning Military Matters</i>
Vell. Pat.	M. Velleius Paterculus (Roman statesman and historian, ca. 30 C.E.)
Xen. <i>Hell. Hellenica</i>	Xenophon (Greek soldier and historian, ca. 360 B.C.E.),

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