A SOURCEBOOK FOR ALEXANDER

W. HECKEL, J. C. YARDLEY: *Alexander the Great. Historical Sources in Translation*. Pp. xxx + 342, map, ills. Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. Paper, £17.99, US$32.95 (Cased, £55, US$64.95). ISBN: 0-631-22821-7 (0-631-22820-9 hbk).

The teaching of Alexander the Great in the English-speaking world has been a staple of undergraduate education in ancient history, and that situation is unlikely to change. The traditional method of instruction is to take students through Alexander's career chronologically, while having them simultaneously read the main extant sources (Arrian, Plutarch, Quintus Curtius Rufus, Diodorus, and Justin). In their new source book Waldemar Heckel and J. C. Yardley have broken free from this traditional approach. Although the book surprisingly lacks any kind of programmatic statement, rationale, or guidance for use in the classroom, their aim can be inferred from the arrangement of the material itself. Thus instead of organizing the sources chronologically, we have thirteen thematic chapters with such titles as 'The Macedonian Background', 'The Persians and their Empire', 'Alexander and the Greeks', 'The Army and War', 'Gods and Heroes', and 'Alexander and the Romans'.

In principle this is a step forward both in terms of methodology and pedagogy. But how does it work out in practice? On the positive side, each section and subsection of the book is preceded by a paragraph with a shaded background, in which the editors explain controversies and cite some of the relevant modern scholarship. Their historical judgement, as well as their command of the relevant bibliography, is excellent. The editors have given generally accurate and readable translations both of the major extant sources (including the Metz Epitome) and of other Greek and Roman writers (but Near Eastern texts are inexplicably missing). In places they should have said more (e.g. Alexander's last plans as recorded by Diodorus are taken at face value and other relevant sources are not cited: p. 290).

Despite its virtues, the book suffers from several major drawbacks that would make it difficult for the student with no previous knowledge of Alexander to use it profitably without supplementation. First of all, both the introduction and the editorial guideposts are far too brief. In a mere fifteen pages the editors give a history of Alexander's career (three pages), a discussion of the lost sources (two pages) and of the major extant sources (two pages), and a listing of minor extant sources (about five pages), followed by a chronology (one page). Both this introductory section and the subsequent shaded background sections contain few dates, and the extracts from the ancient sources are entirely undated. This will make it extremely difficult for the reader to make sense of the sequence of events or to place events in any sort of historical context. For instance, in the section 'Alexander on Women', Alexander's encounter with Timoclea of Thebes comes after his meeting with Darius' womenfolk and the Amazon queen (pp. 192–200), and all of these episodes (as all but one in this section) are undated.

A similar problem appears in the section 'Gods and Heroes'. The sources for Alexander's trip to Siwah Oasis are followed immediately (and without editorial comment) by extracts from Aelian and Plutarch pertaining to Alexander's alleged request to the Greek cities for divine honours (pp. 217–22). Neither of these events are dated and the relationship between them is left unexplained. The reader must turn to the chronological chart on p. xxix for the date of the trip to Siwah, but she will search

The Classical Review vol. 55 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2005; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni124 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in vain for any date or explanation of Alexander's request to the Greek cities for deification. It should also be noted that extracts from the orators Dinarchus and Hyperides (which are the crucial bits of evidence for lifetime deification in mainland Greece) should have been included here. Omissions aside, the problem of chronological disorientation undermines the whole enterprise. The death of Darius is narrated on pp. 65ff., whereas Alexander visits the King's family at Issus on pp. 192ff, and so on. Perhaps this would not have been a problem if the editors had given a date to each extract.

By treating Alexander's conquest thematically the editors encourage teachers and pupils to ask different questions of the evidence and to look at old questions in new ways. Yet, at the same time, the particular vice of source books is that they take evidence out of context. The extracts in this book range from several pages to single sentences, but all suffer the same fate of appearing as so many *disiecta membra*. In the case of the major extant sources this is especially unfortunate, because what is lost is any sense of their giving a coherent view of Alexander with their own particular themes and concerns. The editors might have addressed this problem by providing in the introduction some sort of analysis of Arrian, Plutarch, Diodorus, and Curtius as authors in their own right rather than perfunctorily giving their dates and possible sources in less than two pages of text. Their lack of interest in the literary aspects of these authors is mirrored in their bibliography, which surprisingly lacks Elizabeth Baynham's fundamental study of Curtius (*Alexander the Great: The Unique History of Quintus Curtius* [Ann Arbor, 1998]) and Philip Stadter's important work on Arrian (*Arrian of Nicomedia* [Chapel Hill, 1980]).

Finally, the arrangement of material is not unproblematic: for example, Alexander's prayer for reconciliation at Opis (Arrian 7.11.9; mistranslated in my opinion) appears in the chapter 'Alexander and the Macedonians' rather than in 'Alexander and the Persians'; the sources on Harpalus are split between pp. 84–7 and 263–6 (in reverse chronological order). A second edition in which the editors contributed a more substantial introduction to the sources, inserted chronological markers along the way, added cross-references between related evidence in different chapters, and provided an *index locorum* would make this a much more useful tool.

Princeton University MICHAEL A. FLOWER
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni124

ALEXANDER AT THE END OF THE WORLD

F. L. Holt: *Alexander the Great and the Mystery of the Elephant Medallions*. (Hellenistic Culture and Society 44.) Pp. xvi + 198, maps, ills, pls. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003. Cased, US$24.95, £16.95. ISBN: 0-520-23881-8.

Our knowledge about Alexander the Great depends on constructed narratives written centuries after his death and derived from lost authors whose biases and agendas we can only vaguely define. Iconography is posthumous and idealized. The contemporary elephant medallions are the exceptions, as Frank Holt's slim monograph argues, brilliantly illuminating an obscure but important area of Alexander studies.

The first of these rare silver decadrachms became known to scholars ten years after

The Classical Review vol. 55 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2005; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni124 Published online by Cambridge University Press