Four Beasts and a Baby
The ‘Baleful Birth’ Omen of Alexander’s Death in its Hellenistic Context

Christian Thue Djurslev
Department of History and Classical Studies, Aarhus University
ctd@cas.au.dk

Received April 2019 | Accepted September 2019

Abstract

The present article hypothesizes that a bizarre omen story of Alexander’s death belongs in a Hellenistic literary context rather than a historical Babylonian one. Several texts, including the Greek Alexander Romance (3.30), relate the birth omen of a stillborn child with living animals for his lower body. The court of Alexander decides to burn the portent. I suggest that the omen should be read as a manifestation of a teras in the Greek paradigm. In support of this argument, I offer comparable evidence from numerous sources, including iconographical material and the animal prophecies, primarily from the Old Testament Book of Daniel. The article ends with some thoughts on how this teras interpretation of the omen story exposes the tale as a Hellenistic construct.

Keywords


1 Introduction

Of the many portents presaging the death of Alexander, the strangest one is that of a stillborn child with living animals for his lower body. The story goes that the unfortunate mother brought this freak of nature to the king and his
Babylonian interpreters, who decided to burn the newborn because it signified a bad omen.¹

There exist two preferred models of interpreting this cryptic story in current scholarship, a Babylonian historiographical context or a Hellenistic political context. To take the former first, Krzysztof Nawotka argues that the vignette has origins in Babylonian religion, supported by comparable animal omens in the Šumma izbu, a Mesopotamian handbook on birth omens.² Nawotka even designates a specific historical context, arguing that the omen’s occurrence was what prompted the ‘substitute king’ ritual, which was performed in the spring of 323 BC. This custom, placing a proxy on the throne until the danger had passed, was intended to prevent the real king’s death.³ Later that summer Alexander’s death proved the attempt to save the king unsuccessful.

As for the latter mode of interpretation, Elizabeth Baynham set forth a subtle explanation of the political backdrop onto which the omen story was attached.⁴ She suggested that the thrust of the story was that the child represented the soon-to-be-deceased Alexander, whereas the living animal legs symbolized the individual Successors, namely, Ptolemy (lion), Seleucus (wolf), Lysimachus (leopard/panther), Antigonus (hound) and Cassander (boar).⁵ Only the lion was deserving of royal status, Baynham proposed, and so the story targeted Ptolemy’s political opponents, who also held royal ambitions that were realized in c. 306/305 BC.

I will argue that, while a Babylonian context may be possible, the omen story feels much more at home in the context of Hellenistic thought. As Nawotka concedes, the exact historical chronology and meaning of the omen is difficult to conjecture, because our sources for the story are much later. A group

---

1 Figures 1 and 2 at the end beautifully illustrate the basic story. I discuss the principal textual references in what follows.


3 For the ritual, see the Greek sources: D.S. 17.116.1-4, Plu. Alex. 73.7-9, Arr. An. 7.24.1-3 (citing Aristobulus FGrH/BNJ 139 F 58 ed. Pownall) with exegesis in Lane Fox 2016, 105-115. For the Latin variation, see V. Max. 5.EXT.1A-B, who situates the story during a snowstorm in which the king gives up his seat by the fire to a freezing soldier. Cf. Fron. Str. 4.6.3 for a similar story and a remark on Macedonian freedom opposed to Persian oppression.

4 Baynham 2000, 257-260 and passim.

5 De morte testamentoque Alexandri Magni liber (LM) 90 (ed. Callu): ... in quibus erat una leonis, altera lupi, tertia pantherae, quarta canis, quinta apri ita ut tota figura simillima uidetur, cuiusmodi pingitur <Scylla>. The Latin text is now available (with French translation and linguistic commentary) in Callu 2010.
of problematic Hellenistic texts, discussed below, have transmitted the story to us, and the earliest datable text hails perhaps from c. 309 BC. Even if the omen was historical, as Nawotka believes, the belated interpretatio Graeca of the sources must matter.

A purely political frame, as argued by Baynham, does not capture the full story either. For example, it is also possible to think of the story in a religious or literary context. I prefer to read it as a manifestation of a teras in the Greek paradigm and I will offer comparable evidence from numerous sources, including iconographical material, to support that contention. In the first part, I discuss sources and the pertinent passage from which I foreground the teras paradigm. In the second part, I turn to the ‘Chaldaean’ interpretation of the omen, arguing that it was rather a ‘Hellenistic’ interpretation. In the third, I test the animal features of the omen story against corresponding traits in another animal prophecy from the Old Testament Book of Daniel. Lastly, I point towards some further themes that fit a primarily Hellenistic literary (rather than historical) context.

In this article, I also hope to raise a methodological point in the study of ancient Alexander discourse, or ‘Alexandrology’. It is now a productive scholarly avenue to focus on individual strands of a story in selected cultures, such as the ‘Roman’ Alexander. In recent decades, emerging data from the Near East has counterbalanced our conclusions from the Greek and Roman material. However, to isolate patterns of cultural thought about Alexander requires a command of a wide variety of blending sources, and so we need to keep an eye on the connectivity of the discourse, as well as pay due attention to what makes a certain period or culture distinct in its representation of the figure. Accordingly, the present focus on the ‘Hellenistic’ may imply chronological and cultural frames that are too vague for some readers, but I use the concept to encompass a culture code of ‘Greekness’ that we see expressed across the post-Alexander dynasties.

---

6 See e.g. Welch and Mitchell 2013. Peltonen 2019 now offers an honest attempt to capture the discourse in the Roman Empire, although the blitz through the plethora of explicit references does not permit him to present a detailed discussion of periodization, greater themes, implicit references, or the Alexander Romance tradition (unjustly dismissed at 219-220).

7 See Briant 2016, 556-569 for the strong suggestion that we must place the historical Alexander within a spectrum of Greek, Macedonian, and Achaemenid contexts. Cf. e.g. Müller 2014.
The Literary Tradition of the Prodigy

It is important to note at the outset that the omen story of the dead baby boy does not feature in the standard historiographical tradition of Diodorus, Plutarch, Arrian, Pompeius Trogus (as presented by Justin), and Curtius Rufus (there is an unhelpful lacuna in Book 10 around Alexander’s death).\(^8\) They relate a host of other omens of death that have their own intrinsic interest and so have received much attention.\(^9\) The alternative group of texts that preserve the omen story under review does not, however, report any of the omens that appear in the historiographical tradition. The alternative group’s exclusive focus on this unique omen story makes it interesting and problematic to contextualize, as we have already witnessed.

The so-called *De morte testamentoque Alexandri Magni liber* or *Liber de morte* (\(LM\)) preserves the primary version of the omen story. The text has a complicated transmission history. The \(LM\) was appended to a separate account of Alexander’s life, known as the *Metz Epitome* (\(ME\)).\(^10\) This late antique work derives from a political pamphlet with early Hellenistic origins. The exact date of the anonymous Hellenistic version has been a matter of scholarly debate. Brian Bosworth and Elizabeth Baynham have put forward the most durable hypothesis, arguing that the Ptolemaic court circulated the pamphlet in 309/308 BC.\(^11\)

A revised version of the story in the pamphlet appears in the *Alexander Romance* tradition,\(^12\) an ever-expanding group of texts, attested in several ancient languages:

– The Greek *Alexander Romance* (hereafter \(AR\)) in two different versions (alpha and beta), conventionally referred to as ‘Pseudo-Callisthenes’, though I do not endorse that practice.\(^13\)

\(^8\) Atkinson 2009, 140-149.


\(^10\) Baynham 1995 for an introduction to this peculiar text.

\(^11\) See Baynham 2000, 244 with Bosworth 2000, 238-241, whose contribution is discussed critically by Heckel 2007 and favorably by Lane Fox 2015, 185-193. For further discussion of the potential dates of the \(LM\), see the relevant literature at Nawotka 2018, 171-173.

\(^12\) Heckel 1988, 86-107 conveniently collates the principal texts in the original languages, although he omits the versions in the Armenian and Byzantine Greek versions of the \(AR\). For a complete translation of the pertinent passages of the \(LM\) 90-95, see Heckel and Yardley 2004, 282-283.

\(^13\) \(AR\) α 3.30 (ed. Kroll), ß 3.30 (ed. Bergson). See now Ogden 2017, 7 n. 6 for the rejection of the Callisthenes-pseudonym; I have also adopted this practice.
The Latin *Alexander Romance* attributed to the mid fourth-century Julius Valerius (Jul. Val.) and its medieval epitome (c. ninth century AD).\(^{14}\)

The Armenian *Alexander Romance* (Arm. AR) from the late fifth century AD represented by three different versions.\(^{15}\)

While the \(LM\) represents the earliest possible authority of the omen story, we shall proceed with the *Alexander Romance* tradition as a control source. The Armenian version is universally acknowledged as the best witness to the earliest version of the Greek AR text, the so-called alpha-recension. This version may be dated, in turn, to some point between the fourth century BC and the third century AD.\(^{17}\)

We will first review the omen itself in the *Alexander Romance* before turning to its interpretation. To discuss the pertinent parts of the omen story, I quote key parts of it from the standard translation of Albert Mugrdich Wolohojian. I then provide analysis of the emphasized sections.

Alexander had written this letter to his mother, Olympias, (a) *while he was in Babylon and was preparing to quit his mortal life*. And the evil spirit gave a great and clear sign, for this omen occurred. When one of the local women gave birth to a child, the upper part of its body, as far as the navel, was completely human and according to nature, but the lower extremities were those of a wild beast. (b) *And its general appearance was like that of Scylla, except that it differed in the kinds of animals and (c) in the great number of them.* For there were the shapes of leopards and lions, wolves and wild boars and dogs. And these forms moved, and each was clearly recognizable to all. And the child was dead, and his body blue.\(^{18}\)

\(\text{(a)}\) The *AR* as a full-scale biography of Alexander does more to anticipate his destiny. The author gives a central place to this omen story. The Greek and Armenian versions agree about the circumstances of the omen, that Alexander was preparing to leave this life in Babylon, ὄντος αὐτοῦ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι καὶ μέλλοντος μεταλλάττειν τὸν βίον, and that a divine spirit, τὸ δαιμόνιον, gave the sign (*AR*...)}
It comes as no surprise that the king had been warned in advance: in a letter, he had previously reported to Aristotle that he was to die in Babylon, a prophecy revealed to him by a pair of speaking trees in India (3.17.36; 3.17.46) and which he omits in the letter to his mother (3.27-28).

(b) The explicit comparison to the painted image of Scylla, τῇ γραφομένῃ Σκύλλῃ (3.30.2) is a rare iconographical reference. It is noteworthy because Julius Valerius and the Armenian AR agree in their criticism of Scylla’s form, a criticism that the LM does not contain. Julius Valerius says that there is a difference in the number and sort of animals from the actual painted Scylla that had dogs and wolves for legs. This remark seems to target Scylla’s image in art, famously described in detail by Virgil. Dogs commonly appear in her artistic representations as well, an iconography that developed separately from her first appearance in Homer’s Odyssey (with six heads and serpentine features). In fact, subsequent artworks and writings never fully settled the question of her form, and there may have been three co-existing traditions about her appearance in the imperial period. Nevertheless, the reference to her appearance shows that the author is explaining the manifestation in terms readily comprehensible to Hellenistic and later readers. This strategy of interpretatio Graeca is fully in line with his typical way of reporting marvels in the extensive catalogue of visual images throughout Book 3 on India and Ethiopia. For example, the author likens the gargantuan fantasy animals that attack Alexander’s men during the ‘night of terrors’ to more familiar creatures, such as bats and foxes.

I believe that there may be a link between the Scylla painting and the only other painting mentioned in the AR, namely Queen Candace’s covert snapshot of Alexander himself. She has his portrait made without his knowledge, which she reveals to him when he visits her in the guise of his own messenger, Antigonus. In the same way as the Scylla-looking baby is a negative representation, so is Candace’s revelation the only personal defeat Alexander suffers in the AR, which matters because he achieves everything through will and

19 For this kind of reading in the historiographical tradition, see e.g. Arr. An. 7.24.1 citing Aristobulus FGrH/BNJ 139 F 58.
20 Stoneman 2016, 89-98.
21 Baynham 2000, 249 n. 16.
22 Jul. Val. 3.54.
24 For the principal iconography and texts besides Hom. Od. 12.73-126, 234-262, see Ogden 2013, 130 n. 66.
25 See now the in-depth study of the subject in Hopman 2012.
26 Arm. AR 240-241.
intelligence. The author says that the image of Scylla represents the whole child, which in turn represents Alexander himself. So, the only two paintings of the AR, that of Scylla (representing the dead child) and of Candace’s Alexander portrait, predict death and defeat to the king.

(c) We note the discrepancy in numbers of animals. The AR tradition emphasizes the plurality and distinctiveness of the perceived animals below the waist, whereas the LM singles out five visible animals. It is a sign of marked difference that the AR stresses the high number of animals. Equally striking is the difference in kinds of animals between the texts: the Greek speaks only of lions, leopards, and wolves, λεόντων καὶ παρδάλεων καὶ λύκων (3.30.3),27 omitting the boar and the dog of the Armenian and the LM. Julius Valerius claims that the animals were lions, leopards, and bears instead of wolves and dogs. This disagreement indicates that the AR tradition may have lost some of the image’s political punch in the LM. If the kinds of wild animals vary, it follows that their projected political identity becomes less important than in the original context, in which five specific animals appear.

The significance of this change is unclear. For example, we may interpret the plurality to mean that there would be more members of each long-lived Diadoch dynasty, in which the sons were even called by the same name, such as Ptolemy or Seleucus. The greater number of lions would then refer to Ptolemy’s heirs. But we do not know whether the author of the AR recognized the original political symbolism of the animals (if Baynham’s reading of the LM is right). The author of the AR may have read the omen and elaborated it by adding many animals. This interpretation also supports Baynham’s contention;28 it is rather the savage nature of the creatures that is significant than the actual attributes of each animal (she reaches that conclusion via a different route).

Leaving the animals aside, we must take a closer look at the dead child. The LM and the Armenian text agree that the child is blue (lividum), whereas Julius Valerius notes that the child is black (colore atro).29 While Nawotka does not find many parallels to this grotesque newborn, it conforms to the literary tradition of ‘evil deformed newborns’, terata, on many levels.30 Terata were manifestations of the wrath of the gods, perhaps of anger towards a single individual,

---

27 Cf. AR β 3.30 mentioning only lions and wild dogs, λεόντων καὶ ἄγριῶν κυνῶν.
28 Baynham 2000, 259: “[M]y feeling is that the author may not have intended any specific attribution. Instead the number of the animals, their strength and savagery are the most important factors …”
29 LM 91; Jul. Val. 3.30. The Greek version does not mention the color.
30 Pace Nawotka 2017b, 164.
and unless disposed of they blighted whole communities. The gods sent them in times of plague, *loimos*, which ruined the land and rendered communities barren. Plague was certainly associated with war since Book 1 of Homer's *Iliad* and so, in our case, the omen may anticipate the scourge of Alexander’s successors. Moreover, although the prodigy appears privately to the mother, she clearly recognizes that the *teras* will affect the whole state when she decides to present it to the king.

The *AR* tradition goes further than the *LM* in situating the omen in Greek thought on *terata* and making its own context for it within its narrative. I take the reference to the two mothers, Olympias and the local woman, ἐγχώριος, to establish a connection between the birth scene and the death omen. When the author narrates the birth of Alexander, he lets Nectanebo instruct Olympias about the hour in which she is to give birth to Alexander (*AR* 1.12). The astrologer, self-exiled Pharaoh and, paradoxically, ‘real’ father of Alexander, relates the many possible destinies open to the child if it is born under certain signs. One of the undesired options he mentions is a monster, if Olympias would give birth in a particular hour, ταύτῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ τέρας γεννᾷς (1.12.8). Strikingly, the terminology used for the Babylonian birth, first referred to as a ‘baby’, βρέφος (3.30.2), is precisely the same, τὸ γεννηθὲν τέρας (3.30.5). Of course, Olympias does not give birth at that time. She holds out until Alexander can be born under the right sign, which makes him a future world ruler, κοσμοκράτωρ (1.12.8). The author of the *AR* thus uses portentous birth at the beginning to link the birth of Alexander with his death.

The *AR* represents the king with many of the physical traits of the later *teras*. First, like the Babylonian baby, he has several animalistic features, including leonine hair and fangs (1.13.3). Secondly, the *AR* tradition emphasizes that Alexander is serpent-born, *ophiogenēs*, the serpent being the ultimate *teras*-creature because of its association with the earth and underworld. Thirdly, Aristotle’s criterion for a *teras* is that the child does not resemble its parents.

31 For a source collection and lucid exposition of the relevant texts, see the first chapter of Delcourt 1986 with expansions in Ogden 1994, 93-95 and 1997, 9-14.
32 Cf. Arm. *AR* 26: “your offspring will be castrated or deformed” (trans. Wolohojian 1969, 32-33); cf. *AR* β 1.12, γύναι, ἐπεξε σεκυτήν καὶ νίκησον τὰ ἐνεστῶτα τῇ φύσει. ἐὰν γὰρ νὸν ἄποκτησής, ὑπόδουλον αἰχμάλωτον ἢ μέγα τέρας γεννήσεις. 
33 *Pace* Jouanno 2002, 199 arguing that there is no cohesion in the text.
34 LSJ, s.v. τέρας with the entry in Montanari 2015.
35 For this expansive literary tradition, see Ogden 2011, 14-56.
and Philip chastises Alexander for not looking like him (1.16.5). If I am correct in the above interpretation of the Scylla and Candace paintings, then this would be another feature that strengthens the link between Alexander and the teras child.

Based on these features, I contend that there was a teras theme running through the AR. This thematic choice seems to suggest that existing Greek tradition fuels the story type. The presence of the teras theme and associated themes (e.g. astrology) produces a consistent narrative that reworks exoticized features from foreign cultures (e.g. Babylonian, Egyptian, Indian) throughout the whole text. This brings me to another important point: the teras theme is significant precisely because the occurrence suggests a stronger coherence in the AR text as a whole than hitherto believed.

3 ‘Chaldaean Interpretation’ and Hellenistic Parallels

In this section, we begin with the Chaldaean interpretation of the teras manifestation in the AR. The basic premise of the story is as follows. After Alexander has seen the baby, the king summons his so-called ‘magi and Chaldaeans’ to interpret the omen. They first offer the incorrect interpretation that the portent showed that the king would rule all men. This interpretation is recanted upon the return of the leader, who apparently was called Philip, hardly an appropriate name for a Chaldaean. Nevertheless, Philip’s strong physical reaction to the omen alarms Alexander and prompts him to ask for a new interpretation (AR 3.30.6-11). When the seer responds that the king is no longer to be counted among the living, having lost his human form, Alexander once again asks for more information (as he repeatedly did when he heard about his imminent fate from the pair of prophetic trees in India):

37 Arm. AR 39 confirms the problematic appearance. Ael. VH 12.14 confirms that Alexander’s appearance was frightening, φοβερόν. Conversely, Plu. Alex. 4.1-7 provides a romanticized description of Alexander’s looks. Cf. It. Alex. 6.
38 For the wider tradition of Alexander’s painted portraits, see the useful survey in Stewart 1993, 363-380.
39 Scholarship, e.g. Jouanno 2002, 17-19, normally considers the work a poor amalgamation of various minor Alexander texts, and the piecemeal nature has repelled many modern readers.
40 LM 92 with the comments name by Heckel and Yardley 2004, 282 n. 8.
41 AR 3.30.11: Βασιλεῦ, οὐκέτι σὺ ἐν τοῖς ζῴσι καταρίθμητος εἶ, ἀλλὰ τὸ σῶμα σου λέλοιπε τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν.
The omen solver answered and said, “O bravest of all men, you are the human body, and the wild animal forms are the soldiers who are with you. If the human part of the body were alive and moving, as are the animals beneath it, you would have been destined to rule all men. (d) But it is this very part that is dead; and the beasts are alive. So just as it has left its living state, so have you too departed to those who are no more. The animals that are bound to the human body have no kind consideration toward man. In the same way, do those who surround you love you. (e) And there will be many upheavals in the world when you depart; and those about you will fall out with one another and will bloodily slaughter one another.” The philosopher spoke thus and left. And the Chaldaeans thought it best (f) to burn the child.42

This interpretation overturns the opinion of the other Chaldaean interpreters, according to which Alexander was to rule over wild peoples. The king could not rule when he was dead.

(d) This odd remark explains the omen that the king was to die, and the animals meant the soldiers accompanying the king. We should not take the soldiers’ ‘love’ towards Alexander too literally. In this context, it is clear that the wicked nature of the beasts symbolizes discord on a general level. The Greek AR says that those around the king are as well-disposed towards him as wild animals are against humans (3.30.13), which seems to be what the Armenian version is trying to adapt. The LM speaks instead of ‘enemies’ (in-imici) rather than loved ones,43 and this hostility makes much sense. After all, the AR is about to report in extensive detail a poison plot on Alexander’s life (3.31-32).44

(e) That the world will be plunged into apocalyptic upheavals and interne-cine warfare upon Alexander’s death is, in retrospect, an accurate statement. The conflicts among Alexander’s successors engendered the memorable anecdote that the dying king himself had foreseen great contests for the control

43 LM 94: et ut hae bestiae humano generi sunt infestae, ita hi, quos circum te habes, <tibi> sunt inimici.
44 The poison rumors must be an early Hellenistic invention, as argued by Heckel 2007. The AR tradition is unanimous in informing us that most of the king’s companions were involved, save for a few, ostensibly blameless, persons—according to LM 98, Eumenes, Perdiccas, Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Asander and Holcias. Some manuscripts have variant names.
of his kingdom. As is well attested, the conflict continued long after the first generation of Alexander’s generals had perished. The remark thus presupposes a certain degree of hindsight.

The negative spin that the Chaldaean puts on Alexander’s demise seems fitting. That Babylon mourned is noted extensively in the historiographical tradition, also in the AR, but to a lesser extent in the LM. There is no single trajectory to insert the comment into, because there were many and varying perspectives on the transitory period to the Successors. An early anecdote, consistently attributed to Alexander’s contemporary, the Athenian orator Demades, suggests that the loss of the king was felt. Like a blinded cyclops, the Macedonian army had lost its vision. In later orators too, the greatness of Alexander turns into a criticism of the many successors, who could not live up to their predecessor. Conversely, in Hellenistic court poetry, the reception of Alexander and his successors was naturally overwhelmingly favorable, as the dynasties sought to forge links to the Argead house. For example, one prophetic poem, Ps.-Lycophron’s Alexandra, spoke highly of the Macedonians, presenting Alexander as a lion and Seleucus as a wolf that would force peace upon the world. Prophetic poetry outside the court was not so positive, however. For instance, the Sibylline Oracles present Alexander’s death as an apocalyptic moment in history that was followed by a period of peril rather than release from danger. As we shall see, the Book of Daniel makes similar criticisms of the successors, culminating in the Jewish revolt against the wicked Antiochus IV (r. 175-164 BC).

(f) The burning of the dead baby is a curious detail. Burning children was rather uncommon in the Greek and Roman worlds. The dead were normally buried. We possess two independent laws from the Roman Republic that

45 See e.g. D.S. 17.117.5 (repeated, perhaps for emphasis, at 18.1.4), Just. 12.15.8, Curt. 10.5.5. Cf. Arr. An. 7.26.3, Plu. Mor. 181e.
46 Noted matter-of-factly by D.S. 18.1.5.
47 See e.g. D.S. 17.18.1-3, Just. 13.1.1-4, Curt. 10.5.10-25 with AR 3.34.1. Cf. LM 111-114.
49 See e.g. Max.Tyr. 28.1: καθάπερ τὴν Μακεδόνων φασίν ἀρχήν έμπεσοῦσαν εἰς ἄνδρας πολλούς, οὐκ ἄδεωμένως ἐπετείλας δίλης, μετὰ τόν Ἄλεξανδρόν.
50 See the wide-ranging source collection of Barbantani 2017 with the study of the Ptolemaic propaganda by Holton 2018.
51 Ps.-Lyc. Alexandra 1435-1448 with the commentary of Hornblower 2015, 491-493.
52 For an Alexandrocentric study of the Sibylline Oracles, see still Gunderson 1977. Though not much studied, the importance of these texts was already recognized by Kampers 1901, whose contribution was unjustly dismissed by Pfister 1956, 10 n. 1 and 1976, 306 n. 8.
53 See e.g. Juv. 15.139-140: uel terra clauditur infans | et minor igne rogi.
terata should be destroyed immediately, but they do not specify the method. It was important to avoid burying the terata in the earth, as they could be reborn from that element. Marie Delcourt has pointed out that some terata cases were more frightening than others, and so those alarming terata should be treated as dangerous animals. She offers several examples of monstrous and ordinary animals that were burned and had their ashes thrown into the sea, such as the mythological serpents that attacked Hercules in the cradle. The freak baby of Babylon certainly fits this scheme, given its lower part consisted of beasts. Audiences may have understood the omen story as an extraordinary teras case that prompted burning.

In the context of the AR, it may be of interest that another method of ridding yourself of unwanted terata was to toss them into bodies of water that would make them disappear. Alexander’s futile attempt to turn himself into a god could be read as such a case of teras riddance. If we are meant to understand Alexander himself as a sort of teras, as I believe, it is interesting that this sort of teras ending is the king’s chosen way to depart. It is equally interesting that Roxane actually prevents him from vanishing into immortality and thus removing the pollution problem from the community. Indeed, this story ties into the whole AR’s play on Alexander’s divinity, to which we shall return below.

Shifting back to the ‘Chaldaean interpretation’, we may situate the entire episode in a Greek context. Ogden argues that the above narrative of Chaldaean self-correction exhibits affinities with Seleucus’ foundation of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris (App. Syr. 58.299-308) and the Nectanebus narrative of the AR (1.1-14). In turn, these narratives refract general themes from Herodotus’ Persian tales, as a sort of pastiche, which not only makes a Greek context obvious, but also makes an early date for the omen story possible.

Another bizarre baby omen from the Greek tradition provides comparative evidence. Phlegon of Tralles, a paradoxographer of the second century AD, tells a story about a hermaphroditic baby that was born among the Aetolians. The

55 Delcourt 1986, 118.
56 Arr. An. 7.27.3 partially preserves another omen story from the AR tradition, namely Alexander’s attempt to orchestrate his own apotheosis by throwing himself into the Euphrates river. In light of other Greek heroes who leapt into immortality in volcanoes (Heracles) or were incinerated by lightning bolts (Asclepius), this way for Alexander to leave the world behind seems to parody such tales. For a thorough discussion of this episode, see Nawotka 2017a, 241-242 and now Baynham 2018 on the pertinent primary literature of Arr. An. 7.27.3, AR 3.32.4-7, LM 101-102.
57 Ogden 2017, 159-160.
people were planning to burn the infant, but the ghost of its father appeared and ate it, save for the head.\footnote{Phlegon of Tralles FGrH/BNJ 257 F 36 (ed. McInerney) = Book of Marvels 2.} As Nawotka notes, this story cannot have had any direct influence on the omen of Alexander’s death, but I think that it is informative in at least three other ways.

First, Phlegon’s story confirms that baby terata could be burned. Secondly, Phlegon’s portent has a political dimension similar to the apocalyptic upheaval of point (e). After the ghost of the father, Polycritus—perhaps a reference to the famous general from Kallion in Phocis—has disappeared, the uneaten head of the child sits on the ground in the Aetolian agora. The head proceeds to utter prophecy to the assembled crowds. The cephalomancy warns of a war between Aetolians and their western Acrarnanian neighbours. The future conflict will bring much ruin on both sides. This information corresponds to what we also learn from the Babylonian omen story: the successors were to slaughter each other after the death of Alexander. Thirdly, the Aetolian story also corroborates an early dating for the Babylonian omen story. While Phlegon may be an imperial author, the political context situates the story firmly in Hellenistic state-focused propaganda, probably the Aetolian league in the late fourth or mid-third century BC.\footnote{See McInerney’s FGrH/BNJ commentary on Phlegon’s F 36 for the mid-third century date. Contra Rzepka 2013, 123-124 arguing that the original source of the story was Hieronymus of Cardia.}

Any exact dating of the omen story in the LM and the AR tradition remains more problematic, however. Nawotka does not elaborate on his theory that the original Babylonian author was an eye-witness.\footnote{Nawotka 2017a, 229.} Only the LM mentions the name of a single Alexander historian, that is, the first-generation author Onesicritus of Astypalaea.\footnote{LM 97 citing Onesicritus of Astypalaea FGrH/BNJ 134 F 37 (ed. Whitby).} This elusive author did indeed write about the East, primarily India. The LM specifically notes, however, that Onesicritus did not want to name the individuals implicated in the poison plot to avoid animosity, a scruple by which the author of the LM does not seem constrained. We do not know with certainty when Onesicritus published his history of Alexander, nor the publication date of any other eyewitness accounts. A famous fragment suggests that Onesicritus told a story about Alexander’s dalliances with an Amazon queen at the court of Lysimachus after 305 BC, but this anecdotal material is hardly conclusive evidence.\footnote{Plu. Alex. 46 referring to Onesicritus of Astypalaea FGrH/BNJ 134 T 8. Baynham 2000, 261-262 suggests that both Nearchus’ and Onesicritus’ works may have circulated well before the LM of 309/8, but Baynham 2003, 9-10 urges caution.}
Phlegon’s Aetolian story thus makes strong connections with the Babylonian omen story in terms of dating, baby burning (related to monster terata), and ensuing political upheaval. To pursue this parallel further, it seems pertinent to explore whether late fourth-century BC minds would be familiar with animals symbolizing people or places in the Greek context.

One striking piece of evidence comes from the lion-hunt wall painting in the famous tombs at Vergina.63 Four hunting scenes depict the following chased animals: deer, bear, boar, and lion. Incidentally, the latter three are the same kind of animals featuring in the Babylonian omen story. There is another parallel in that modern scholars believe that each of these beasts represents a geographical region to be conquered in Philip’s projected Asian campaigns.64 While the image certainly provides us with symbolic animals, there is unfortunately no scholarly consensus as to which region each animal embodies, or which ‘Philip of Macedon’ lies within the tomb. So, we encounter a similar issue of vague identification, as we did in the case of the beastly legs in the Babylonian omen story. Even if this correlation is not an exact conceptual match, one can easily imagine that onlookers of the fourth century BC would have recognized the animals of the omen story as distinct territories.

The conclusion will already be clear. Given the combination of Phlegon’s tale and the image of the wall painting, one may envisage a scenario in which the ‘Babylonian’ omen story was readily comprehensible in a time close to the historical Alexander. It seems justified to draw these comparisons because patterns of thought do not always overlap in an exact manner, but they can nevertheless inform us of common cultural motifs. In this regard, the Book of Daniel, another Hellenistic text, provides useful comparanda.

Some readers may object that I put forward the Book of Daniel as evidence for the ‘Greek’ side. However, as Paul Kosmin has recently shown, Seleucid imperial context shaped the work much more than we have previously thought.65 He has convinced me and other scholars that it is only possible to understand the work in the Seleucid context, because the Jewish author(s) engage(s) with many themes of the Seleucid politics in order to subvert the propaganda of their oppressors. For example, the way in which the Seleucids conceived of their reigns as everlasting is overturned by the abrupt periodization of history that we find in the Danielic prophecies, such as statue imagery of Dan. 2. In

---

63 I thank Antonio Ignacio Molina Marin for drawing this item to my attention in this context.
64 Ignatiadou 2010 offers a survey of the main contentions.
65 Kosmin 2018, 137-163.
relation to Alexander, it is notable that the author puns on the greatness of the animal illustrating that king, the he-goat of Dan. 8.66

4 Apocalypse and Animal Imagery in the Book of Daniel

All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.67

This major prophetic work in the Old Testament (OT) is situated at the centre of a scholarly minefield. The Book of Daniel comes down to us not only in several languages (Aramaic: chapters 2.4b-7.28; Hebrew: 1.1-2.4a, 8-12; full Greek version from the 160s BC), but also in further revised Greek versions that include new material, such as the stories of Susanna and of Bel and the Dragon. Jews and Christians, ancient and modern, debate whether the book has canonical status or not, and the text itself also occupies different positions within the OT.68 Nonetheless, we detect much coherence as animal and apocalyptic themes occur consistently in the work. For example, the most famous story concerns the Jewish protagonist thrown into the lion den (chapter 6).

Dan. 7 and 8 are most pertinent to the present purpose.69 The former contains the following vision. In a dream, Daniel saw four monstrous beasts arise from the ocean: first, a lion with the wings of an eagle that turned into an upright, two-legged lion; second, a bear with three ribs in its mouth; third, a four-headed leopard with four bird-like wings; and fourth, a terrifying monster with iron teeth (tusks?), trampling feet, and ten horns (Dan. 7.2-7).70 These four beasts represented empires that were to give way to God’s fifth and final kingdom. Daniel had previously interpreted one of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams in which these empires had appeared to the ruler as a statue containing precious metals of gold, silver, bronze, and iron mixed with clay.71 Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265-339 AD) offered a synthesis of the two visions. He interpreted them to mean that, while the greedy Babylonian king had seen a statue

---

66 The earliest Classical attestation of the magnus epithet is Pl. Mos. 775, but the Jewish author seems effortlessly familiar with the notion in the same century. For this conclusion, see Kosmin 2018, 154 n. 69.
67 From George Orwell’s Animal Farm (1945), as quoted in Smelik 1979, 109.
69 Discussed with regard of the Alexandrocentric and the Hebrew view in Amitay 2010, 110-111.
70 Perhaps a Seleucid war elephant, according to Kosmin 2018, 151-154.
71 Dan. 2.35-45.
representing power and wealth, the prophet had seen the true nature of the future imperial powers, namely, their brutal bestiality.\footnote{Eus. \textit{PE} 15.1. Cf. Hippol. \textit{Comm. Dan.} 4.2.1-4.7.5. The various ancient commentaries on Daniel are collated in Stevenson and Glerup 2008.}

\textit{Dan.} 8 relates another dream vision. The prophet had seen the two animals at Susa, apparently under Belshazzar, whom the text represents as king of Babylon, and the scene is situated by the nearby river Ulai (Eulaus). It is written that the one-horned ‘goat of goats’\footnote{\textit{Dan.} 8.8: ὁ τράγος τῶν αἰγῶν.} will break the horns of the two-horned ram. Once the ram is destroyed in a jousting of horns, the he-goat grows great, dies, and its horn is broken into four. We learn from the Archangel Gabriel’s interpretation to Daniel that the sign relates to the end times: ‘as for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. The male goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power’ (\textit{Dan.} 8.20-23 NSRV). This prophecy foretells the transition from Achaemenid Persia to the Macedonian Empire, which culminates in the period of Alexander’s successors (the four horns to which each successor is periodically assigned). Consistent Jewish and early Christian interpretations of the passage suggest that both the he-goat and the single horn symbolize Alexander himself.

I must first address the issues involved in comparing the omen story to the Danielic prophecies. There are some immediate discrepancies between the prophecies and the omen story. First, it is problematic to compare mystic prophecy (Daniel) with the physical manifestation of a portent (omen story), although Daniel’s dreams may of course count as divine manifestations of a sort. Secondly, the occurrence of Daniel’s visions is not triggered by anyone’s birth or death specifically, as Alexander’s omen story is. The prophecies simply occur to Daniel during the Babylonian exile of the Jews. Thirdly, the animals that Daniel sees are not attached to a human being, as they are in Alexander’s case, but the beasts all emerge from a single point of origin, that is, the ocean. The important matter is that they too represent human entities or new kingdoms. Fourthly, the eschatology in both omen and prophecy suggests different endings: the omen story predicts the upcoming war, whereas the vision of Daniel promises a positive outcome of the earthly empire’s fall (\textit{Dan.} 7.18). These discrepancies aside, we notice some key similarities.

The first similarity is that, as in the wall painting from Vergina, \textit{Dan.} 7 contains three of the same animals as the Babylon omen story, namely bear (in Julius Valerius’ version), lion, and leopard. Unlike the Vergina painting,
however, Daniel's four beasts are hybrids. In a sense, however, a hybrid nature is also true for Alexander's omen story because the animals are attached to the dead child. The Danielic beasts are rather more hybrid in their monstrosity, but this only underscores the point that beasts can symbolize violent rulers in the ancient context. Furthermore, like each lower body part of the Babylonian freak baby, Daniel's four beasts are explicitly said to designate an empire (Dan. 7.17). Each animal has a distinct character that may be indicative of its identity. Speculation about who is who abounds, and interpretations depend on the period and what conviction the commentator has. For example, the Greek philosopher Porphyry of Tyre (c. 233-305 AD) caused controversy with his interpretation. Whereas some saw the fourth animal as Rome, he identified it as the successors ending with Antiochus IV. In his view, the Christians had no claims to the prophecies of Daniel because the prophesied events had already happened; therefore Christian attempts to refute his work appeared in the Greek East. One argument Christians used to refute Porphyry was that Daniel's animals represented Babylon/Assyria (lion), Persia/Media (bear), Macedon (leopard), and Rome (iron-monster). But some Syriac Christians, and many others further east, concluded the list with the Seleucid successors.

Another important point of comparison is the use of numbers. In the omen story, there are five animals, which is the same as the number of empires in the Book of Daniel since God's final kingdom counts as the last one. If we again follow Baynham's suggestion that the lion was “only one of the contenders that deserved royal status”, we may see the Danielic prophecy as a model in that there are four negative positions to occupy before the arrival of the true monarch. Moreover, we detect a clear passing of one to four rulers in the case of Dan. 8. The single great horn of the he-goat was split into four horns which were identified as Ptolemy I, Philip III Arrhidaeus, Seleucus I and Antigonus by Jerome of Stridon (c. 347-419 AD). For Jerome, none of these rulers rose to such great power as Alexander, however, and for that reason the prophet had seen them as smaller horns. We note that horns and animals may both

74 A staple motif of ancient texts, see e.g. 1 Enoch 85-90.
75 See e.g. Porph. Chr. 21T Becker = FGrH/BNJ 263 F 37 (ed. Toye); 22T Becker = FGrH/BNJ 263 F 38.
76 Porph. Chr. 13T Becker = FGrH/BNJ 263 F 35.
77 The principal variations of interpreting the sequence are helpfully tabulated in Inglebert 2001, 362-364.
78 Casey 1979, 51-73, analyzes the Syriac tradition, as well as Porphyry's engagement with it.
79 Baynham 2000, 259.
represent rulers, and so the task of identifying them becomes harder. For example, it must be noted that the ten horns of the fourth beast, as well as the ten toes of the quadrmetallic statue in Dan. 2, were regularly identified as rulers or forms of government. This enabled commentators to push the apocalypse further into the future by updating the sequence of people.\footnote{See e.g. Hippol. Comm. Dan. 2.12.3-13.2.}

Regardless of whether Alexander was conceived of as the third or fourth beast, the successors were embedded into the commentators’ interpretations. If Alexander was the leopard, the four heads of the creature symbolized the successors; if he was the fourth beast, it was the ten horns that each became a chain of succession down to Antiochus IV. For example, Jerome took the four heads to mean the same successors which in his view were represented by the four smaller horns in Dan. 8.\footnote{Jer. Comm. Dan. 2.6.6 (CCSL 75a.842). Cf. Jer. Comm. Dan. 3.11.4b (CCSL 75a.900). Hippol. Comm. Dan. 4.3.8 replaces Antigonus with Demetrius; Theodoret. Comm. Dan. 7.6 (PG 81.1417) maintains Antigonus’ place, but says that previous writers had wrongly spoken of ‘Antiponus’, Antipater, or Philip III in relation to Macedon.} This choice reveals the consistency of his interpretation of the prophecies. It is notable that Jerome included both Philip III—whose selection suggests an early interpretation from before his death in 317 BC—and Antigonus, who did not become king before 306 BC, but nevertheless was one of the major players in the aftermath of Alexander’s death. Seleucus’ meteoric rise seems to coincide with his re-taking of Babylon in April of 311 BC.\footnote{Ogden 2017, 97-98. Cf. full bibliography in Yardley, Wheatley and Heckel 2011, 271.}

A third major point of convergence concerns the apocalyptic nature of the omen story and the Danielic tradition. Both texts envisage the Diadoch period as the last days of the current world order. We may detect this concept of inevitable future change in Daniel’s prophecies, which would culminate in the conflict with the Seleucids in the Maccabean revolt of the 160s BC. i Maccabees (c. 100 BC) also portrays the Seleucid successors as evildoers of apocalyptic proportions with the focus on Antiochus IV rather than Alexander.

The opening of i Maccabees makes for intriguing reading since the historical narrative is one of the first synoptic accounts of Alexander’s life that is still extant. Some scholars argue that the text seems neutral towards Alexander’s character,\footnote{See e.g. Klęczar 2017.} but I do not believe that this can be maintained in light of the king’s association with Antiochus and the change of era brought about by his conquest of Persia. It seems rather more convincing that Alexander and Antiochus were the villains of this story, and the reign of the Persian King Darius III—the only other king explicitly mentioned by name—represented a
more positive time in the history of Israel. In addition to this representation of the ‘Greek’ invaders, 1 Maccabees also gives us a flavor of the Jewish counter-moves to Seleucid propaganda from which we can extrapolate material which the Seleucids wrote on Alexander during the Hellenistic period. We will return to the role of the Seleucids below.

A fourth striking similarity relates to the setting of the omen story and Daniel’s visions. I have already drawn attention to the literary setting of Babylonian court tales. This type of tale certainly applies, especially to chapters 1-6 of the Book of Daniel, which focus on the interactions between Babylonian kings and the Hebrew prophet. Although chapters 7 and 8 are Daniel’s visions, they still occur in Babylonian territory and fuse together strands of the story from the earlier chapters. Hence, the basic story type revolves around the reigning king and his interpreters in Babylon. In the Book of Daniel, the protagonist advises the various rulers of the city, whereas in the omen story, the woman, the Chaldaean seers, and the Chaldaean leader advise the Macedonian king respectively. Alexander’s Chaldaeans actually explain the omen under the threat of death in the same way that Nebuchadnezzar’s advisors worked under the same conditions. Moreover, the omen story is almost an inverted version of the tales in the Book of Daniel: this time Alexander, not Daniel, is the high-profile foreigner in the Babylonian court.

85 As observed by Eckhardt 2017, 252.
86 As already said, the Maccabean Alexander narrative summarizes the king’s achievements in terms of war. Alexander’s defeat of Darius caused a new ‘Greek’ era, and his testament bequeathed his Empire to his successors after which they proceeded to do evil in the world. Since the next section begins with Alexander’s ostensible successor Antiochus IV (1 Macc. 1.13), the Hasmonean author undermines one of Seleucid propaganda’s central claims, namely, that they had invented their own dynastic temporality that set them apart from their imperial predecessors under Seleucus I (cf. Kosmin 2018, 77-101, 153-154). The Hasmonean author lays great emphasis on Alexander’s will (1.5-8), and the case for a pro-Seleucid version of that document is convincingly set out in Nawotka 2018, 161-164, partially anticipated by Ogden 2017, 64, citing my readings of Amm. Marc. 14.8.5, 23.6.8. That the writer engaged with pro-Seleucid sources seems apparent in this regard, but there is also a more obvious proof: the absence of Alexandria. Without the lasting cultural achievement of the metropolis’ foundation, Alexander becomes just another conqueror, however successful, which is clear from e.g. Livy’s famous Alexander digression at Liv. 9.17-19 (he does not mention Alexandria either). Removing Alexandria from Alexander’s achievements reduces Ptolemaic influence and claim to Alexander, which was certainly in Seleucid interest. By omitting Alexandria from the list of achievements, 1 Maccabees makes it seem as if the Seleucids are the sole successors to Alexander, which is exactly the claim of the testament in Amm. Marc. 23.6.8. As for the motives of the Hasmonean writer, we can only speculate. He may have wished to omit the city in order to alienate Alexandria’s Jewish community, for which he generally shows no concern.

87 Dan. 2.9 with Nawotka 2017a, 230-231.
To sum up, both the authors of the AR’s omen story and of the Book of Daniel use the following literary motifs: hybrid animals; numerology; the succession from Alexander to his generals; presenting this transition negatively; and the geographical and literary setting. Given these parallels, I suggest that the prophecies of Dan. 7 (and 8) provide a compelling model for thinking about the function of the animals in the Babylonian omen story.

5 Which Hellenistic Context?

I have suggested that, taken together, Daniel’s animals, the Vergina painting, and Phlegon’s teras story offer a ‘Greek’ model for the baleful birth omen. However, dating and context of origin still pose problems. For instance, in the host texts, Alexander’s will appoints Seleucus to rule over Babylon and Babylonian territory (LM 117; AR 3.33.15), which he did not do until 311 BC. What is more, the texts treat well both Seleucus and Ptolemy, the respective founders of successful Hellenistic dynasties. For example, the end of the AR passes blame on various members of Alexander’s court for plotting his death, whereas Ptolemy is exculpated.

We normally consider the LM and AR Ptolemaic by nature, but other suggestions have been made in the past. We have already witnessed that Seleucid and anti-Seleucid texts, such as i Maccabees, made use of similar stories to those in the AR tradition, and it makes sense that the Seleucids would have composed documents that countered those crafted in a Ptolemaic context. Indeed, the AR contains episodes that represent Alexander in not wholly positive terms, which we would have expected if the text is setting him up as a divinity of Alexandria. For example, we have already discussed the Euphrates episode in which Roxane thwarts her husband’s attempt at apotheosis.

Another instance of this tendency is the king’s dead body. His physical remains actually cause further conflict in death. Ptolemy receives the oracle from Babylonian Zeus that he is to take the body of Alexander from Babylon to Memphis in Egypt (AR 3.34.3), but the priests there inform Ptolemy that he needs to bring the body to Alexandria (3.34.5-6), because wars will never cease to spread from the place where the body rests. Therefore Ptolemy builds Alexander’s tomb in Alexandria (3.34.6). Neither Babylon nor Memphis want to host the king, which ultimately justifies Ptolemy’s taking of the body to his new capital. But the story is rather ambiguous in that Ptolemy does not only

---

88 For example, Fraser 1996, 3-46 contended that we could trace Seleucid, anti-Ptolemaic propaganda in the various AR texts preserving the list of Alexander’s cities.
want war to be brought to the other cities, but also in that he agrees to take those wars to Alexandria itself.89

Perhaps the most striking part of the Babylonian omen story is the focus on the negative outcome of Alexander's death. If an early Hellenistic dating of the omen story is correct, it was probably one of the first in the field. In the context of successor history, the AR tradition's interpretation of the omen story seems strange, for so many successors sought to position themselves positively with the previous Argead royal line. This is why the teras interpretation of the omen works so well. That Alexander's body rests in the world explains the turmoil of the Diadoch Wars.90

6 Conclusion

In the present article, I have argued that the bad omen story was probably a politically motivated fiction that presented Alexander's last days in an engaging manner, not a historical omen. In the LM, the strangeness of the omen can be explained in the context of Greek teras literature, which also ties several of the other stories of death together, such as the tale of Roxane at the Euphrates. The painting of Scylla mirrors the image of the teras baby (Alexander) as half man, half beast, which the AR develops in much more detail. This teras theme is important for the author of the AR, for it supports the narrative arch. If we compare the texts' versions of the omen story with further textual and iconographical evidence, the features correspond in large part to those appearing elsewhere. In case of the Book of Daniel, we find that there is an actual Seleucid and anti-Seleucid context through which we can understand several ideas in the omen story under review. It remains, however, difficult to come closer to a specific context in which the omen story could have been composed, but an early Hellenistic literary context is a viable hypothesis.

89 Ael. VH 12.64 preserves a rather more pro-Ptolemaic version of the tale, saying that Aristander, Alexander's chief seer, had predicted that the city Alexander first dwelt in should be joyous and undefeatable forever. See also AR 3.34.5-6, supplied by the Arm. AR 283, with Ausfeld 1907, 211-212; Nawotka 2017a, 263-265. It is notable that Alexander's place of burial is such a big issue in the historiographical tradition that Diogenes the Cynic can mock Alexander about the location in Luc. DMort. 13.3.1-4.11 (Diogenes acts as Lucian's mouth-piece). For the problem of Alexander's body in Hellenistic politics, see Erskine 2002.

90 Demades of Athens did not believe that Alexander was dead in Babylon because the whole world would reek of his corpse. For the anecdote, see Demades of Athens FGrH/BNJ 227 F 81 ap. Dem.Phal. Elec. 282. Cf. Demades of Athens FGrH/BNJ 227 F 82 ap. Plu. Phoc. 22.5.
The *teres* baby is born and the news reaches King Alexander. Byzantine manuscript in the Hellenic Institute of Venice, Codex 5, fol. 185r (http://eib.xanthes.hnsp.gr/scripts_and_minatures/)
The woman presents the *teras* baby to King Alexander and he disposes of it. Byzantine manuscript in the Hellenic Institute of Venice, Codex 5, fol. 185v (http://eib.xanthi.ilsp.gr/scripts_and_miniatures/)
Given this, I cite with approval Heckel’s contention that the dead baby omen is “pure fiction,” because I also conjecture that the story was an early Hellenistic literary construct. I have assembled additional evidence and arguments that make an early Hellenistic dating possible and perhaps even plausible, but given the transmission of the LM and the AR, we cannot categorically exclude a later dating.

Bibliography

AR α The Greek Alexander Romance, MS A (α recension), in Kroll 1926.
AR β Bergson 1965.
Arm. AR Wolohojian 1969.
GCS NF Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Neue Folge.
ME Metz Epitome, ed. Callu 2010.
NRSV New Revised Standard Version, see Coogan 2010.
Syr. AR Budge 2003.


91 See n. 2.
92 I thank Elizabeth Baynham, Benedikt Eckhardt, Benjamin Garstad, and Daniel Ogden, for help with this article. Criticisms by the journal’s reviewers helped to clarify my thought. None of the above carry responsibility for any errors that may remain.


