

I. WORTHINGTON: *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Pp. xvi + 332. London: Routledge, 2003. Paperback, £20.10.

With Hollywood ready to provide even more 'spin' to the story of Alexander the Great we have in *Alexander the Great: A Reader* an opportunity to get back to basics. The substance of this book is a translation of 112 fragments of primary source material (writings or inscriptions from Alexander's lifetime or soon after), followed by some of the most important excerpts from modern scholarship. Previously, unless one read German and had access to Felix Jacoby's massive *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, one was essentially at the mercy of secondary source material alone, writers who had access to the primary source material but who wrote over three hundred years after Alexander's death. There was of course C.A. Robinson's English translation (1953) of Jacoby's fragments but, to the best of my knowledge, that work has been out of print for some time. One important feature of this book then is that it provides access for English language readers to some of the fragmentary primary sources for Alexander. These ancient sources and the accompanying modern scholarship are organized into eleven concise thematic chapters. The themes Worthington (hereafter W.) has chosen to include are as follows: "source materials"; "Alexander's background"; "Alexander and the Greeks"; "Alexander and Asia"; "Alexander, India and the final years"; "Alexander and the 'Unity of Mankind'"; "Alexander and deification"; "Alexander and conspiracies" and a final chapter of assessment entitled "Alexander: the Great?".

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction to the chosen theme, followed by a relevant selection of fragments from the ancient sources and then a short bibliography. The substance of each chapter is an excerpt or number of excerpts from modern scholarship. The *Reader* contains the work of some of the most important scholars in Alexander studies over the last half century. The list of scholars included is very impressive. There are contributions from A. B. Bosworth, N. G. L. Hammond, P. A. Brunt, E. A. Fredrickmeyer, T. T. B. Ryder, F. W. Walbank, I. Worthington, M. M. Austin, A. K. Narain, J. F. C. Fuller, W. W. Tarn, E. Badian, G. L. Cawkwell, and F. L. Holt. The modern literature included ranges from 1948 through to 2000. Chapters are organized so that the contributions sometimes complement one another to give extended coverage of a particular topic, but also on other occasions, the chapter contains excerpts which provide two or more conflicting points of view concerning a particular theme. Undergraduate students will be encouraged to understand that scholarship is fundamentally a matter of opinion, and hopefully the juxtaposition of contradictory views will help sharpen critical faculties. This then is another great strength of this book, which will make it a useful tool for both students and teachers alike.

Description of two chapters will give some idea how the *Reader* operates. Chapter two concerns Alexander's background. After a brief introduction, a number of primary source fragments are presented followed by a short reading list of modern literature. Then N. G. L. Hammond in an excerpt from *The Macedonian State* argues that the Macedonians were essentially Greek even if they did speak a different form of the language. In another excerpt from Hammond's *Alexander the Great: King, Commander and Statesman* the powers and role of the Macedonian king are discussed. Finally an extract from A. B. Bosworth's *Conquest and Empire* focuses on the reign of Philip II. All sections combine to give a comprehensive overview of Alexander's immediate background. By contrast, chapter eleven, on whether or not we should consider Alexander 'Great', after following the same format of introduction, source material and reading list juxtaposes some excerpts of conflicting opinion. Hammond is chosen to present the image of Alexander which most people have and Hollywood is, I suspect, about to reinforce, i.e. an almost entirely

praiseworthy character. This is followed by W. who, following a trend begun by Badian and forcefully expanded on by Bosworth, pushes the pendulum in the opposite direction entirely focusing on a much more negative appraisal of Alexander's reign which casts some doubt on his deserving of the title 'Great'. Finally an excerpt by F. L. Holt argues persuasively that scholarship can succumb all too easily to such extremist positions and that W.'s zeal to condemn Alexander has forced him, at times, into a prejudiced reading of the source material. The other chapters operate along similar lines.

W. has produced an interesting and very useful reader. A different editor might have chosen a slightly different list of topics but I see little wrong with the present selection. One might argue that we ought now to drop Tarn's much refuted 'unity of mankind' theory and yet it does still provide a starting point. W. makes reference to another *Reader* on Alexander edited by W. Heckel and J. Yardley scheduled for publication in 2004, which will provide extracts from the secondary source material. Combined, these *Readers* might be enough to prevent much of the population from believing in the fast approaching Alexanders of Leonardo DiCaprio and Colin Farrell, but I doubt it. For reprint purposes, I noticed minor typographical errors on pages, 20, 57, 67, 94, 100, 154, 193, 198, 248 and 252.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth
KIERAN MCGROARTY