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GUENDALINA DANIELA MARIA TAIETTI
WITH SARAH CROMPTON, MICHAEL EVANS &
APRIL PROBERT

(University of Liverpool)

Alexander the Great Scouser¹

to Richard Stoneman

Abstract This composite booklet offers eight essays written by three of my keen students: Sarah Crompton, April Probert, and Michael Evans. They graciously agreed to publish some of the assignments that were given during the module ‘The *Alexander Romance*: An Introduction to the Ancient Reception of Alexander the Great’ held online in February–March 2023 at the Continuing Education department of the University of Liverpool. Our work aims at giving Alexander a life in Liverpool, UK.

Keywords Alexander the Great, Classical Reception, Liverpool (UK), *Alexander Romance*, Pseudo-Callisthenes, Continuing Education.

¹ The term ‘Scouser’ is used to describe an inhabitant of Liverpool and a speaker of Scouse, the Liverpool dialect. Cf. Watson (2007).

INTRODUCTION

Alexander III of Macedon was born in Pella in 356 BC and prematurely died in Babylon in 323 BC, after conquering the Achaemenid Empire and reaching ancient India, the edge of the then known inhabited world (*oecumene*). He is remembered for his great military skills, charisma, his interest in Greek literature and scientific explorations. His impact on Greece and Persia was so big that he was given the name ‘the Great’; in fact, he acted as a catalyst and his conquest brought about a new period, the so-called Hellenistic Age, in which Greek culture spread in the East and was enriched by the local cultures it came in contact with.²

Several artists, scientists and writers followed Alexander in his campaign, but these contemporary sources are in a fragmentary state; our main sources are two authors who lived in the Imperial era, namely Plutarch (*Life of Alexander; De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute*) and Arrian (*Anabasis Alexandrou*), and the ‘Vulgate tradition’ (Diodorus Siculus, *Library XVII*; Curtius, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*; and Justin, *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus’ Philippic Histories*).³

Pseudo-Callisthenes’ *Alexander Romance* is an *open work*⁴ that started to be composed in the third century BC in Egypt at the Ptolemaic court; the final first version of this text, which we call *recensio alpha*,⁵ dates to the third century AD. It is considered an *open work* because it developed over time and encompasses different literary genres, such as prose, poetry, and epistolography; it is called *Romance* because it portrays Alexander as a mythological hero on a quest for immortal glory. The *Romance*’s hero has similarities with the historical Alexander, such as his decisiveness and charismatic leadership, but also deviates from him, becoming a welcoming ruler and defender of the oppressed, whose aim is to explore the world and unify the different peoples living in it. In the tradition of the

² For the historical Alexander, cf., e.g., Bosworth (1988); Green (1992); Bosworth and Baynham (2000); Roisman (2003); Briant (2010); Worthington (2014).

³ On the Alexander-historians, see Jacoby (1923–1958): Alexander historians (IBi: 117–153) and commentary (IID); Hammond (1983); Yardley and Heckel (1997); Baynham (1998). Hamilton (1999); Prandi (2013).

⁴ Konstan (1998).

⁵ For the Greek text and the English translation of the *Alexander Romance*, see: <http://www.attalus.org/info/alexander.html> (accessed on 01/12/2023). Stoneman (1991); cf. Stoneman (2007–2010).

Alexander Romance, Alexander travels to the West until the pillar of Hercules; he wins the Olympic Games in Rome and then he sets for his campaign in the East against the Persian king Darius. After defeating Darius, he marries his daughter Roxane, flies to the sky carried by two griffons, and he is lowered into the Sea in a glass jar for the sake of exploration. He visits fantastic places and meets the Amazons, peoples with one leg, dog-headed or without head; he eventually dies young after being poisoned, and, on his deathbed, he recognizes that all his riches and indomitable desire for conquest were all vain.

Over the centuries the *Alexander Romance* was translated from Greek into many languages and adapted to different cultures, making Alexander not only Great but immortal too.

The idea to give Alexander the Great a life in Liverpool came to my students during a lesson in which we had a lively discussion about the personality and deeds of the Macedonian king. My students were called to decide whether the historical Alexander was great or not, before moving to meeting the legendary hero of the *Alexander Romance*. The module, entitled ‘The *Alexander Romance*: An Introduction to the Ancient Reception of Alexander the Great’ was held online in February–March 2023 at the Continuing Education department of the University of Liverpool, and was designed to provide the students with an introduction to the ancient reception of Alexander the Great, with a particular focus on the *Alexander Romance*. This module was accessible to all students, regardless of prior knowledge of Greek literature or history; within eight weeks we read and discussed texts (in translation) taken from Ancient Greek Historiography, Biography and Novel, and developed critical thinking and analytical skills.

Through the exploration of both the historical and legendary aspects of his life, my students gained a deeper understanding of this iconic Macedonian hero and formed educated opinions on his place in ancient history and mythology; they surely went above and beyond my expectations, making Alexander one of them, a Liverpudlian on a quest.

This composite booklet offers eight essays written by three of my keen students: Sarah Crompton, April Probert, and Michael Evans. They graciously agreed to publish some of the assignments that were given during the module to engage with Alexander and make his legend live further. The first essay, by Michael Evans, is entitled *Alexander’s Epic story: Fortune Favours The Bald?* and builds on Alexander’s fascination with Achilles and his disappointment for lacking a Homer to sing his deeds. Michael also plays with Alexander’s famous *anastole* – the flipped locks on the Macedonian’s forehead, visible in many por-

traits of the king – and links the fall of his leonine mane with the loss of his power, giving Alexander an almost Biblical stature.

The second and third essays, entitled *Olympias' recension* and *Graveyard smash at the Monster Mash* were written by April Probert. In *Olympias' recension*, April challenges the image of a weak and gullible Olympias as presented in the *Alexander Romance*. In the first chapters of the *Romance*,⁶ Olympias is mistreated by her husband Philip, who threatens to abandon her if she does not produce offspring, and is beguiled by the astrologer Nectanebo, the last Egyptian Pharaoh who fled to Macedon and tricks her into having intercourse with him disguised as the god Ammon. April rewrites the story giving Olympias agency and creating a character closer to the historical Epirote woman.

In *Graveyard smash at the Monster Mash* April brilliantly mixes an incident in the *Alexander Romance*, i.e. Alexander's theft of Darius' cups at his dinner party,⁷ with night-life in Liverpool city-centre and modern pop culture.

Sarah Crompton's two pieces, *The Alexander interview for Radio Zeus* and *Blind Date*, see Alexander participating in a radio interview and a British dating game on the television. In the first essay, Sarah engages with two episodes of the *Alexander Romance*: Alexander's participation in the Olympic Games⁸ and his taming of the men-eating horse Bucephalus;⁹ in the second, she gives voice to Roxane,¹⁰ a Bactrian princess who married the historical Alexander and Darius' daughter in the *Romance*, who describes the Macedonian's charm and flaws, building on the Alexander-historians, the *Romance*, and ancient art.

The next two essays, *Archaeogaming: The representation of the campaigns of Alexander in Firaxis Games' 'Civilization IV Alexander scenario'* by Michael Evans and *Alexander: The Original 'Gamer'?*¹¹ by April Probert explore the world of video-games and Alexander's Persian campaign through the lens of gaming.

6 *AR* (α) I, 4–10.

7 *AR* (α) II, 15.

8 *AR* (α) I, 18–19.

9 *AR* (α) I, 17, 2: [Ptolemy says]: “This is Bucephalus, which your father secluded because it is anthropophagus (ἀνθρωποφάγον)”. On Bucephalus, see also Plut. *Alex.* 6, 2–3 and Arr. *An.* V, 19, 4–5.

10 Berve (1926) II. 346–347, n. 688. See also Müller (2012).

11 The term ‘Gamer’ is used to describe someone who plays videogames and considers it to be a significant part of their identity.

Archaeogaming is a growing field which present antiquity in an attractive and engaging way; Michael and April's contribution to the field and engagement with Alexander are most welcome.¹²

In the last essay, entitled *El Libro de Alexandre*, Michael Evans shares his findings and thoughts about this Spanish Medieval version of the legend of Alexander, with the aim of making it more accessible to the English-speaking audience, and as a homage to the Hispanic community in Liverpool.¹³

The last section, entitled *Alexander the Great Scouser: Work Report*, showcases the authors' sources of inspiration, but also the literary and stylistic choices adopted to create this booklet.

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¹² On the reception of Antiquity in video-games, cf. Thorsen (2013); Rollinger (2020); Clare (2021).

¹³ For the thriving Hispanic community in Liverpool, see <https://hpl.warwick.ac.uk/> (accessed on 27/03/2024).

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ALEXANDER THE GREAT SCOUSER: ESSAYS

Alexander's Epic story: Fortune Favours The Bald?

Michael Evans

Sing, goddess, sing of the wrath of Alexander
That brought torture and death to the historian, Callisthenes
For describing the king as he truly was.

When did the king's insecurity first grow? During his youth, in the city of Pella. Aristotle, tutor to Alexander, had asserted a link between a man's hair and his virility; clearly seeking to flatter his young pupil, who was in youth already sporting his famous blonde *anastole*. But in a later lesson, Aristotle, father of all sciences, had also taught Alexander heredity – that all living things, be they olive trees, boars, or sons of kings of Macedon, were fated to resemble their parents.

Wise Alexander, synthesising Aristotle's teachings, considered his father's appearance, and was dismayed that by middle age he had lost much of his hair – indeed, Philip's head resembled a one-eyed egg in a nest. The Macedonian prince shuddered as he contemplated his father's eventual loss of manhood, and, by extension, his own. This greatly troubled the young prince, who confessed his anxiety to his noble mother. And Olympias, powerful among women, consoled her son with a terrible confession – that Alexander was not Philip's son, but the offspring of luxuriously-tressed Zeus himself. And Alexander was greatly heartened by his mother's reassurance. Indeed, while he had thought himself a son of a mighty king, now he was even greater – the son of a god and a mortal woman, a brother to gorgon-slaying Perseus and cousin to mighty Achilles, celebrated by Homer for his generous chestnut locks as much as his prowess in combat. And Alexander concluded that just as Zeus kept his hair in later life, so would he.

Later, when Alexander began to carving out his kingdom, he always kept three things close to hand – his very good friend Hephaestion, his man-eating steed Bucephalus, and his copy of the *Iliad*, gifted and annotated by Aristotle. And at night, Alexander dreamed of the long-haired Achaeans fighting before the walls of mighty Troy. But it was at Corinth that Alexander was confronted with the reality that he was losing his hair. It was the loathsome dog-man Diogenes who dared to speak truth to power. When asked by Alexander if he wanted for anything, the cynic whispered, “Move your head, for I am dazzled by the sunlight reflecting off your temples”. Taken aback, Alexander later claimed that Diogenes had merely asked him to step out of the way of his sunlight.

For the son of Philip had noticed that he had less hair about his temples than before, but he assumed that the falling locks of his *anastole* concealed it, just as the wings of the little owl hide its flanks. In fact, his companions had noticed, but were rightly afraid to pass comment. And Diogenes’ barbed words so affected Alexander that from this time onwards, he kept his head covered in public – by a crested helmet when in battle, and by a lion’s skin when holding court.

After Alexander had crossed the Hellespont, he made pilgrimage to the tomb of Achilles. There, the royal poet Anaximenes sought to flatter the king (and indirectly, himself) by proclaiming that the king would become as celebrated as Peleus’ son. But Alexander retorted “I would rather be Homer’s Thersites than your Achilles”. And that night, the young king had a vision of Thersites as described by his beloved poet: stoop-shouldered, lame, and, most terrifying of all, bald. “You too will lose your hair, Alexander, and then you will lose your kingdom” prophesied Thersites.

And who was the first casualty of Alexander’s insecurity? It was nearly Alexander himself, on the long march to Tarsus. The king’s secret reason for heading south from the Cilician Gates was that he wished to visit the Cydnus, renowned for its healing properties. For the physician Philip had counselled Alexander that by sprinkling a few drops of its water on his head daily, the progress of his baldness might be halted and reversed over time.

But by now, the king was desperate. In recent weeks, he had been forced to abandon his *anastole*, instead combing his remaining hair forward in an attempt to conceal his receding hairline. There was even a drachma-sized bald patch growing on the top of his head.

And upon sighting the glistening Cydnus, Alexander galloped Bucephalus towards the banks, unbuckled his armour and threw himself headfirst into the fast-flowing river. For the king thought that by submerging his whole body, the water’s curative effects would be immediate and permanent, as were the

waters of the Styx for the infant Achilles. But the snow-fed river was ice-cold, and the only effect the waters had on Alexander were to make him gravely ill.

And so, just as the borders of the king's empire advanced, so did his hair-line retreat. And the true reason that Alexander adopted Persian dress was the opportunity to conceal his shiny scalp with a large hat. The Macedonians at court, fearing the king's wrath, offered no protest. But one day a luxuriously-haired officer, newly arrived with reinforcements from Macedon, made the mistake of teasing the king for choosing barbarian ways and attempted to remove Alexander's Persian headdress. The hat, which in fact sported a built-in wig made of lion's fur, tumbled to the ground, and the entire court saw Alexander as he really was – as bald as an egg.

The furious king, scrambling to place the hat back on his head, ordered that the officer be dragged away and executed, and threatened the same fate to any other who suggested that Alexander had anything less than a full head of hair. And it was then that poor Callisthenes sealed his fate. For the historian, angered at Alexander for presenting himself in such a false manner, stood up and exclaimed, "Future generations must know the truth. And while every one of Lysippus' statues is a lie, my histories will show you as you really are".

The king condemned the historian to the same fate as the doomed Macedonian officer. But while Alexander succeeded in silencing Callisthenes, it did not prevent the oracle of Thersites from being eventually fulfilled. For at Babylon, the king accidentally poisoned himself with a baldness remedy of his own invention. And so Alexander lost his hair and then his kingdom.

Olympias' recension

April Probert

Queen Olympias was preparing to have the palace to herself, when she was called to King Philip. "Take note of this: if you do not bear me a son after I return from the war, you shall never know my embrace again", Philip said angrily to her before walking out of the room. Later that day he left a confused Olympias to ponder quite how he imagined she would bear him a son if he was wandering around Greece without her.

One of Olympias' servants took her puzzled expression for worry and offered to summon a recently arrived Egyptian prophet to grant her favour with the gods. Olympias made enquiries about the prophet and learned that he was a devotee of Ammon, which she knew to be another name for Zeus. Thinking on

Philip's earlier threat, she laughed to herself and summoned Nectanebo to begin preparations to produce a son for the king's return.

When Nectanebo arrived, she listened carefully to his prophecies and asked if he could summon Ammon to meet her one night in her bedroom. The prophet said it was possible but that he would have to be close by, in the next room, to perform the summoning ritual.

"What form does this god take?" she asked.

"He is a man of middle age", replied the prophet, "With hair and beard made of gold, and horns growing from his forehead. He will come to you tonight in a dream. I will need to be close at hand to make prayers to him on your behalf".

Olympias was suspicious of Nectanebo, as she knew that a mortal cannot see a god's true form and live, but she smiled and thanked the prophet. The queen allowed him to stay in the room next to hers, and took a covered lantern to bed that evening. Later that night, a horned figure entered her room and tried to climb into her bed. Averting her eyes, she reached out as it approached until she found one of the horns and pulled on it. The sheepskin easily came off Nectanebo's head as she uncovered the lamp and lifted it high, demanding "Where is Ammon?". The startled and blinded prophet fell to the floor then fled, turning into a serpent as he reached the door.

Olympias was left to think over the encounter. Although the prophet had tried to deceive her, he clearly was not a fake. The next morning, she summoned Nectanebo and told him that if he could produce Ammon that night then she would allow him to stay in the court, if he could not, she would tell Philip upon his return of what the prophet had attempted the previous night. Nectanebo agreed to perform the ritual and left to make the preparations. That night, Ammon visited Olympias in the form of a ram. Ammon agreed to give her a son who would become a great king and far surpass Philip's deeds.

Nine months later, when Olympias gave birth, she saw there were two very small horns on her son's head. She smiled to herself as she presented him to her husband.

Alexander the Great Scouser

Graveyard smash at the Monster Mash

April Probert

Merseyside police are asking for witnesses to come forward with any information they have regarding several incidents, which took place in the early hours of Saturday 1st November at a local venue during their annual Monster Mash Halloween party.

Just after midnight a strange gang of men, wearing what are believed to be costumes from the Zack Snyder film *300* complete with replica weapons, entered the *Sarapis* club in Liverpool city centre. The group were led by a man riding a large horse wearing a pair of plastic devil horns over a similar outfit, who a couple of the unscathed attendees overheard being addressed as 'Alex'.

Shortly after entering the party there was an altercation after almost all of the plastic goblet-style cups, which were being used to serve punch, disappeared mysteriously. Things turned nasty when a group of vampires, some pirates and two gentlemen dressed as a centaur accused the newcomers of stealing their cups. 'Alex' is alleged to have produced one of the cups from his oversized armour and thrown it at one of the jack sparrows before assaulting the group as well as a number of bystanders with his accomplices. Carnage ensued, with the casualties including a couple of mummies, a wolfman, a Frankenstein, a cluster of zombies and a very clever animatronic Ent from *The Lord of the Rings*.

Things only calmed down after a woman dressed as *Buffy the vampire slayer* accompanied by a large group of hobbits and witches chased the gang off. Whilst police tried to give chase on foot, they were forced to abandon the pursuit after the group crossed an inexplicably frozen over Mersey escaping to the Wirral, leaving only a trail of plastic goblets falling into the fast-melting river. Police are also asking if anyone has seen either of the centaur men, who have not been heard from since the night of the incident.

The Alexander interview for Radio Zeus

Sarah Crompton

Radio Presenter (P): Today, listeners, we have the great honour of welcoming Prince Alexander of Macedonia to our studio.

Welcome, Prince Alexander, to Zeus radio, and thank you for sharing your precious time with us today.

Alexander (A): The pleasure is all mine; this presents me with a good opportunity to talk to the Macedonians and hopefully win them over to my vision for the future for our nation and its people.

P: Indeed!

Listeners, Prince Alexander has just returned victorious from the Olympic Games.

I know our audience will be keen to hear about how you came to be crowned with the garland of victory in the chariot race of all things – just incredible!

A: Yes, but I always believed in my ability to win, of course. I was never deterred by my youth or inexperience. My victory was never in doubt. My father was sceptical and I had to beg him to let me go; in the end, he had to acknowledge my enthusiasm and gave me his blessing. He wished me good fortune.

Well, I am sure your listeners know I am descended from Heracles on my father's side and Achilles on my mother's. I am the son of the god Ammon. My abilities and attitude are therefore one of a god and a hero. I seek valour and glory in all that I do. I intend to take that spirit with me into future battles and to extend this kingdom across the known world. This victory will be one of many, I am sure.

I also owe my victory to my most prized of horses, Bucephalus, whom I tamed and trained. He is just like me – bold and lion-like. We are as one in our hunger for victory.

P: Please tell us more about Bucephalus, a horse of exceptional strength and beauty; we owe so much of our national success to such horses?

A: Bucephalus was given to me after a wager with my father who thought, like everyone else, that Bucephalus was untamable, and me too young and inexperienced to ride him. They simply accepted that he was beyond the limits of any man's ability and strength. I did not. They were mistaken and I proved them wrong. In this act, I proved my skill with horses but also how to tame men to my will. A wild horse such as Bucephalus is more difficult than any man to bend and shape – as man can be persuaded by reason. This has taught me to never give up, that there is always a way to achieve what you want. Bucephalus recognised my superiority: this was his saving grace. He saw himself in me and I in him. He recognised his true master in me. My ability to win him over shows that victory is as much an art of tact and persuasion as of physical prowess. Once enemies can

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be persuaded to see that their interests lie with me rather than against me, they will allow themselves to be bent and moulded like Bucephalus.

My father King Phillip of course misjudged my ability, but he had to admit he was greatly impressed by my taming of Bucephalus. I rode Bucephalus through the centre of Pella for all to see that it is me who is destined to be ruler not just of Macedon but of the entire world.

As Aristotle taught me, the world is a garden for the state to master. My father had to acknowledge that I would live to outdo him in the scope of my glory, power, and kingdom. Even the most hesitant and can be tamed when the right approach is taken.

P: Your father King Philip is known as a great warrior. I am sure that he guided you well in the art of war and battle strategy?

A: My father has often talked to me of his exploits, his employment of shrewd tactics, his disciplined troops who did not afford luxuries but take their reward in their victory over their enemies and the glory it brings to Macedon. An army built for speed and efficiency with horses being key to their success. Macedon's ability to raise and train horses of such good stock has proved time again to be our strength in battle, and it is Bucephalus who will take me forward into my future battles.

P: You are only 15 years old, yet I am sure our listeners will be impressed by how mature you are and how wise you are for one so young!

A: I have never been one for play or childish things; I can thank my mother Queen Olympias for giving me a strong sense of my destiny as a future king and ruler not only of Macedon like my father but of the whole world. She has given me my unlimited sense of what is possible – my ambition is to outdo all that have come before me. All I have done and continue to do leads me to this. I am hungry for all learning that will bring me success.

Before we end the interview, I want to give a shout-out to my dearest and wisest teacher, Aristotle – it is he who has helped shape my mind and given me the ability to question. Last but not least, he taught me that knowledge is power.

P: That's it for today, listeners. I know Alexander has to rush off to the palace for a family wedding. I am sure you agree this has given us an intriguing and rare

glimpse into the everyday life of our prince. Alexander, please promise us you will return soon!

Blind Date

Sarah Crompton

Background.

I have based this piece of fiction loosely on the program *Blind Date*. This was a British dating game show which ran from 1985 to 2003 and was hosted by Liverpool singer Cilla Black. The format for the show was to take three singles of the same sex who would be asked a series of questions by an individual of the opposite sex from whom they were hidden. This individual would pick their date based on their answers to the questions posed. Their choice would then appear from behind a screen. They would go on a date together and return the following week to reveal how the date went.

Blind Date

Cilla singing:

... *Surprise, surprise, the unpredictable hits you between the eyes ...*

The music stops and Cilla puts her arms around Roxie who is smiling and giggling.

Cilla: Well, who is going to be the lucky man that our lovely Roxie will choose? So, Alexander, your turn to tell us why Roxie should pick you?

Alexander: Roxie, you will not be disappointed. My looks are matchless – some have said unique! Much has been written about me that testifies to my strength and athleticism. I am simply divine! I challenge you to resist my warmth and intelligence. I stand above all and everybody that have gone before me – for they are mere mortals. My beauty has inspired great works of art. I impressed the great sculptor Lysippos and he has represented me well – my tousled hair, my full lips, my melting eyes – they are beyond compare!

My skin is fair with a rather inviting ruddy tinge. I have a fiery hot temperament that gives rise to a sweet smell that permeates my skin, my clothes, and

Alexander the Great Scouser

my breath. My valour and my glory will impress you like it has so many before you. I am brave, passionate, ambitious, and daring.

One day I will rule the world and you Roxane will be my queen. I will set earth under our feet!

Cilla: Ooh, Roxane, that's an offer you can't refuse? Who will Roxie choose? Let's find out after the break!

Alexander steps out from behind the screen; Roxie lets out a scream of excitement – or is it shock!?

Cilla: Alexander and Roxie, let's see where you will be going on your date (*Cilla tears open an envelope*). Fabulous! You will be going on a picnic for two in the rugged Macedonian countryside.

Promise to come back next week and tell us how it went!

Roxie and Alexander leave the stage – Alexander a few steps ahead of Roxie.

One week later.

Cilla: welcome back, Roxie and Alex! Well, tell us all how your date went? We can't wait to hear!

Roxie: When I first saw him, I was shocked: he is so short but the hair definitely made up for it. His hair is magnificent – sort of reminds you of a lion's mane, don't you think? And that flick at the front – just gorgeous, so sweet.

His eyes are one of his best features: one eye slants down, the other is clear. So you are never sure if he's looking at you or not.

His teeth are – erm – unusual: they are sharp and pointy; I did recommend a good dentist, but he didn't seem bothered.

Cilla: what about the date, how did that go?

Roxie: Well, he arrived by horse; he insisted that his horse join us at the picnic. It was a little bit off-putting when he told me the horse was the love of his life. Also, he brought one of his mates, Hephæstion, along – they sat a little too close to each other for my liking.

He was wearing these weird ram horns on his head – when I asked him why, he said something about being the son of a god.

We ate olives and bread. He demonstrated his skill with a spear and killed a wild goat some 50 metres away. Hephaestion cooked it. The meat was a bit tough!

Alexander was a little full of his own importance. He drank too much wine, and the more he drank, the more he went on about when he had defeated such and such and ‘when I am king of the world’ and on and on blah blah.

He came across as brazen and boastful, but I think it was the drink talking – no one can be that cocky.

He has no table manners: he ate his food fast and burped a lot. But he had brought along the most delightful gold cups to drink our wine from – they looked familiar, actually, now that I think about it.

Overall, I couldn’t help being charmed by his ambition, his love, and his thirst for power and wealth.

Cilla: Roxie, it sounds like a match made in heaven!

Roxie and Alexander leave the stagehand in hand.

Archaeogaming: The representation of the campaigns of Alexander in Firaxis Games’ *Civilization IV Alexander scenario*

Michael Evans

Archaeogaming is an emerging discipline which uses the interactivity of video games as an educational tool to examine the past. This can involve games where the player performs archaeology within a game environment – essentially an archaeology simulation – but more broadly can include any game which contains a significant depiction of history. It is in this latter sense – a computer game as historical representation – that I will briefly examine the depiction of Alexander’s campaigns in Firaxis Games’ *Civilization IV: Warlords scenario* (2006).

The *Civilization* or ‘Civ’ series, starting with the original *Civilization* (Microprose, 1991), are ‘4X’ games (an abbreviation of explore, expand, exploit, exterminate). Critically-acclaimed, the *Civ* series can be said to have originated and defined this genre. In these turn-based games, the player leads a civilization of their choosing, starting with a single ‘settler’ unit in 4000 BC, through a combination of the aforementioned ‘4X’ mechanics, and in competition against computer-controlled (and, in later games, human-controlled) players to build

a civilization to ‘stand the test of time’. There are several pathways to win the games, with a range of military, scientific, and in later games, economic and cultural victory conditions. Because of their open-ended nature, the games have a very high replay value.

The *Civ* series has a long association with Alexander. The first three *Civilization* games all featured Alexander as the default leader of the Greek civilization. 1996’s *Civilization II* also had a scenario themed around Alexander’s conquests, though due to its more primitive game engine it was a simpler affair.

Civ IV scenario has several differences from the unmodified or ‘vanilla’ *Civ IV* game. Rather than starting in 4000 BC with a single city-building ‘settler’ unit and zero scientific knowledge, the player starts in 336 BC in control of the entirety of mainland Greece, with several contemporary military units standing ready to cross the Hellespont. Instead of a whole randomly-generated world ready to be explored, the scenario map is confined to a rectangle roughly containing mainland Greece, Egypt, the Achaemenid Empire, and India. The other civilizations in the scenario are led by Darius of Persia (with whom the player is already at war), Mazaces of Egypt (a Persian vassal in this scenario), and Porus of India, each commanding a reasonably geographically and historically-accurate empire. This is in contrast to the vanilla game which features a random selection of opponents based on great leaders of history, all starting, like the player, with a single settler unit.

In many ways, *Civ IV scenario* is a successful representation of Alexander’s campaigns. There are a range of units with different strengths and weaknesses, with the Companion cavalry, phalanxes and siege engines notably featured. The figure of Alexander himself is represented in the form of a ‘great general’ unit, bestowing advantages upon the units to which he is attached. The constraints of the map limit the player’s attention to the historical region of Alexander’s conquests. The chronological constraints placed upon the player – with the scenario starting in 336 BC and lasting 200 turns (approximately down to the time of the historical Alexander’s death, as a turn is about one month of human life), are necessary – in combination with the scenario’s scientific constraints prevent the player from concentrating on military research and crossing the Hellespont with advanced gunpowder-based units.

Civ IV scenario has several shortcomings, however. Due to its nature as a modification for an existing grand-strategy game, it omits middle and lower-level perspectives. *Civilization IV*’s game engine does not simulate down to the battlefield level. As such, one of Alexander’s most celebrated traits – his tactical brilliance – cannot be depicted. In *Civ IV*, success in combat has more to do

with building a larger, more technologically-advanced army than the opponent, rather than inspirational leadership in the field.

Civ IV scenario measures the player's score in a simple manner – by counting the number of cities held by the player after 200 turns. This mechanic is designed to encourage the player to head east and capture enemy cities. But perhaps because of this incentive, the ability to build new settlements from scratch – a central mechanic of the *Civilization* series – has been disabled in the *Alexander scenario*, probably to prevent the player from simply founding new cities in Europe to inflate their score. I find this ironic, however, as the historical Alexander was as much a founder of cities as a conqueror. Ultimately, we are left with a game which forbids Alexander from building his many Alexandrias.

Playing *Civ IV scenario* made me appreciate Alexander's determination and the enormity of his task. The cities of Greece, and those of Egypt and Persia that fall to Alexander's sword, are reduced to factories churning out military units which the player then marches eastwards one tile at a time like so many pawns. Far from being exciting, the experience is repetitive and monotonous. While the historical Alexander had lieutenants to handle such logistical drudgery while he focussed on the grander strokes, the nature of the *Civ IV* game engine means that the player has to micromanage all units.

I also paused to reflect on what was being simulated here, as well as how accurately. In conducting a military campaign solely from a map perspective, the player can be forgiven for being detached from the destruction of war. For the armchair general, warfare is as abstract and bloodless as a game of chess. The historical Alexander, however, had no such defence. He was a commander who led from the front. As such, he was directly involved in combat and witnessed the consequences of his actions in terms of human misery and suffering, and yet he continued to march eastwards all the same. Ironically, putting myself in the place of Alexander has reinforced my opinion of him as a bloodthirsty conqueror, rather than a hero to be emulated.



Figure 1 A computer-controlled Alexander sends an emissary to the player in *Sid Meier's Civilization* (Microprose, 1991). (The poor picture quality is due to the age of the game and the comparatively low resolution of the monitors available at that time.)



Figure 2 The title screen of the *Civilization IV – Warlords* ‘Alexander’ scenario (Firaxis Games, 2006)

Alexander the Great Scouser



Figure 3 The western part of the game map on the first turn, with a player-controlled Greek mainland. Note the minimap in the bottom-right corner showing the extent of the scenario's map. (Firaxis Games, 2006)



Figure 4 The player’s armies stand ready to cross the Hellespont. Note the variety of historically-accurate units, including siege engines, Companion cavalry, *prodromoi* (scout cavalry), phalanxes, *hypaspists* (shield bearers) and archers. The ‘great general’ unit representing Alexander can be seen in the top left.

Alexander the Great Scouser



Figure 5 A playthrough of the scenario after 120 turns (326 BC). The map is centred on the current front line. The minimap shows the extent of the player's conquests, including the entirety of Egypt and the western half of the Achaemenid Empire. Porus' India can be seen in purple at the bottom of the screen. The large number of units shown on the screen is testament to the sheer strength of numbers needed for victory.

Alexander: The Original ‘Gamer’?

April Probert

In this piece I will explore the character of Alexander through his similarities to the modern stereotype of a ‘gamer’ (in the worst possible sense). For the sake of this piece, in which I aim to discuss some aspects of Alexander the Great’s reception, I will focus on the fictional character presented in Pseudo-Callisthenes’ *Alexander Romance* and translated into English by Richard Stoneman.¹⁴ Thus my piece is not intended to be representative of any person living or dead, but of the *Romance*’s Alexander as a gamer.

Some of the best qualities of Alexander can be seen through the gamer-lens: he clearly likes a challenge and to have fun, carrying losing sides in play fights as a young man and eagerly competing in the Olympics. His cunning and intelligence can be seen in both the historical aspects of the *Romance*, and the more fantastical; when he receives gifts from Darius intended to shame him back to Greece, he accepts them and shows how they can be adapted to his own ends. He regularly uses map exploits to achieve victory, finding wormholes to blink his army across countries at will and using the thawing of a frozen river to overcome larger forces multiple times. Alexander also shows a curiosity and desire to explore the world around him, stopping mid-campaign to investigate the less coherent extremities of the map that the developers did not really intend you to see. The adventures with glass jar diving and visiting the blessed land allow a more collaborative nature to be seen, taking advice from his companions and leaving a note with directions (which I like to imagine surrounded by helpful instructions reading ‘try jumping’).

There are also quite a few negative traits to Alexander associated with gamer culture too. From his heated gaming moments (burning down Thebes) to idle death threats through voice chat (threatening to cut out Athenian tongues then forgetting what he said almost immediately afterwards), Alexander certainly seems to have some anger issues. Although his foray to the end of the world showed us an inquisitive side, we see a cruel streak too. His first response to finding almost any new creature was to try to kill it and, upon capturing some centaurs, his disinterest in their diet leaves them to starve to death. This incident with the captured centaurs exemplifies Alexander’s tendency to treat others

14 Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance*. Penguin (London and New York 1991).

(mainly, but not always, non-Greeks) as NPCs.¹⁵ He even forces his parents to remarry when they split up, in a manner that shows both some horrible attitudes towards women and relationships.

In conclusion, gamer Alexander is a land of contrast. He shows some signs of being interesting, but also of being a self-centered sociopath who is willing to send a seemingly limitless number of people to their deaths in the pursuit of rare achievements. Although most gamers do not have an IRL¹⁶ kill count, the character of Alexander seems to share aspects of the toxic culture associated with a significant number of (usually) men who identify themselves as ‘gamers’.

El Libro de Alexandre: an introduction

Michael Evans

The *Alexander Romance* is an account of the life of Alexander the Great. In antiquity, its authorship was credited to Callisthenes, one of Alexander’s court historians. However, this is an impossibility, as Callisthenes was executed on Alexander’s orders in 327 BC and the *Romance* describes events which occurred after Callisthenes’ own death. Thus, the original, still-unknown author is identified as ‘Pseudo-Callisthenes’. The content of the *Romance* is largely fantastical, containing references to mythical creatures and supernatural episodes. While the *Romance* does describe several events which are supported by historians, these are often placed in an incorrect, sometimes nonsensical, chronological order. The *Romance* was widely translated over the course of centuries, with each translation introducing changes, to the extent that the *Alexander Romance* can be considered a literary genre, rather than a single work.

The *Libro de Alexandre* is a version of the *Alexander Romance*, composed in Old Castilian, a medieval Iberian language. The ten-thousand-line poem starts with a six-stanza introduction, followed by a roughly chronological account of Alexander’s life in three parts: i) his youth and education; ii) his rise to power; iii) and the maximum extent of his power and fall; and it ends with a seven-stanza conclusion. However, the *Libro* contains several digressions, including a lengthy segment recounting of the whole Trojan War, which can even be considered a separate poem in itself.

15 NCP is the acronym used by games for ‘Non-Playable Character’.

16 IRL stands for ‘In Real Life’.

The author intended to supplant the *mester de juglaría*, or ‘ministry of the jongleur’, an oral style employed by *juglares* (bards and storytellers) in their performances, often of *chansons de geste*, to the public. By contrast, the *Libro* is written in *mester de clerecía*, or ‘ministry of the clergy’, a written style using the *cuadernia vía* metre (stanzas of four lines, each an alexandrine) and dealing with serious religious and historical subjects for the consumption of the educated.

The *Libro* portrays Alexander as a king who is flawed because he directs his energies outwards, rather than inwards and towards self-knowledge. As such, it can be considered a *speculum principis*, perhaps aimed at the court of Alfonso VIII himself.

The *Libro* survives as two manuscripts, known as *manuscritos O* and *P*, along with three fragments known as *Med*, *G* and *B*. *Manuscrito O* was once in the possession of the Duque de Osuna (hence the *O*), and is now in Spain’s Biblioteca Nacional. The older of the two extant manuscripts (dated to the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries), it also contains two apocryphal letters from Alexander to Olympias. It attributes its own authorship to Juan Lorenzo de Astorga, and contains Leonese language features. *Manuscrito P*, on the other hand (currently in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, hence the *P*), appears to have been composed in the fifteenth century, attributes its authorship to Gonzalo de Berceo, and displays Aragonese linguistic features. Neither of the manuscripts appears to be the original, and it is likely that their differences were created by their copyists.

The principal source that the *Libro* draws on is the *Alexandreis* of Walter de Chatillon, an influential Latin epic poem from the twelfth century, based on Quintus Curtius Rufus’ *Historiae Alexandri Magni*. The *Libro* was also influenced by another Latin translation by Leo the Archpriest, the *Historia de Proeliis*; by Quintus Curtius directly; and by the work of Pindar, Josephus, Isidore of Seville, and the Bible.

The date of the *Libro*’s composition is not precisely known, but an upper and lower bound can be placed on it. As it is strongly influenced by the *Alexandreis*, whose latest date of composition scholars consider to be 1178, the *Libro* must have been written after that year. In turn, the *terminus ante quem* is 1250, the year of composition of the *Poema de Fernán González*, which bears the *Libro*’s influence.

As with the original *Romance*, the author of the *Libro* is unknown. The two main contenders for authorship were Gonzalo de Berceo and Juan Lorenzo de Astorga, though modern scholarship considers the poem to be anonymous. Something of the character of the author can be inferred, however. The author

was fluent in Old Castilian and had access to the several sources mentioned previously. Furthermore, the *Libro*'s many digressions serve to display the author's erudition. He was highly educated, and may have attended a university, feasibly the University of Palencia, Spain's first university, which was founded by Alfonso VIII during the early thirteenth century. We can speculate that the author was trained as a royal administrator, possibly by scholars from Paris or Bologna. In the twelfth century, the *Alexandreis* was used as a teaching tool, much as the *Aeneid* was, and this may be how the author became aware of it. Both Castile and the University are close to the *Camino de Santiago*, an east-west pilgrim route across northern Spain ending at Santiago de Compostela, exposing its inhabitants to cultural influences from elsewhere in Europe.

The *Libro* is significant because it was the first work of *mester de clerecía*, which would go on to encompass over thirty different works, including the more famous *Poema de Fernán González*. These established Old Castilian as a language for serious literary composition, which later evolved into Castilian, also known as Modern Spanish.

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ALEXANDER THE GREAT SCouser: WORK REPORT

Sarah Crompton's Work Report

There is a long tradition of placing Alexander in different historical periods, philosophical and religious contexts, and geographical locations – he has travelled back and forth through time and place. Many of the stories involving Alexander are implausible and belong to the realm of legend and fantasy; this makes him all the more interesting for anyone who has studied his life, both real and imagined. Alexander's appearance in an episode of *Blind Date* and his interview with *Zeus Radio* seemed in keeping with this tradition. He has been represented both as hero and villain: he has been loved, admired, hated, and vilified at different times and by different people.

I like to think Alexander would have enjoyed the game show and the radio interview: he would have had no difficulty in talking up his unique and exceptional qualities, and would have been happy at any opportunity to speak of his military conquests and future plans for world domination. Following the long tradition of Alexander's glamorisation, I am able to transport Alexander into the late twentieth/early twenty-first century into a trashy but much-loved British game show. Such shows feed our need for modern day heroes and villains. They hold a mirror up to our own lives, values and morals. Through shows like this we all come together to share this feast of pretence and spectacle, and to judge, admire and vilify in equal measure. I think many of the contestants of *Blind Date* desired fame – even if only for fifteen minutes – just like Alexander, whose 'passionate desire for fame implanted in him pride and grandeur of vision' (Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 4).

Though Alexander would not have shared our modern-day obsession with romantic love, or our belief in monogamy, I like to think that Alexander did have a sense of humour and would have played along. Marriage for Alexander would have been a way to consolidate power and establish political alliances. Alexander was polygamous and we are told of some of his sexual conquest in the *Alexander Romance*; since romantic love back then was unimportant in the marriage process, in *Blind Date* Alexander makes no real attempt to woo Roxane.

Alexander married the historical Roxane in 327 BC, most likely for political and diplomatic reasons: she was the daughter of a Bactrian chief and this marriage would have helped to quell unrest and bring unity in a newly conquered Bactria region far from home. Roxane has also been subject herself to myth making and fantasy.

The reference to the golden cups used at the picnic is taken from an incident in the *Alexander Romance* II, 15 where Alexander, disguised as a messenger, feasts at the court of King Darius. He steals the golden cups he is drinking from, concealing them in his cloak before fleeing for his life when his true identity is revealed. Roxane recognises the golden cups at the picnic. In fact, according to the *Alexander Romance*, Roxane is the daughter of the Persian king Darius, whose dying request to Alexander is to take care of the women in his family: 'I commit to you my mother and my wife but especially my daughter Roxane, your wife' (*AR* (α) II, 20).

Alexander brings along his faithful general and friend Hephaestion to the picnic. Roxane remarks on their physical closeness and finds this disconcerting. This plays with the idea that their love for each other was sexual. In her 1972 novel *The Persian boy*, Mary Renault builds on the idea that Alexander and Hephaestion were lovers. She also draws on a quote in Curtius' *Historiae Alexandri Magni* VI, 5, 22–23 that describes Bagoas as a eunuch of remarkable beauty 'who had been loved by Darius and was afterwards to be loved by Alexander'.

Alexander's appearance has been a matter of speculation for more than 2000 years. My Alexander is a caricature: he is a mixture of the physical characteristics and qualities he is said to have possessed according to different sources. The *Alexander Romance* hints at Alexander's divine parentage, and this same claim is made by Plutarch in his *Life of Alexander* 2, 1. Moreover, there are numerous coins with images of him wearing ram's horns to signify his divine parentage as the son of Ammon-Zeus.

I describe Alexander as having sharp pointy teeth, since in the Greek *Alexander Romance* I, 13 'his teeth were as sharp as nails'. In his *Life of Alexander* 4, 1–2 Plutarch writes 'we are told he is fair skinned with a ruddy tinge that showed itself especially on his face and chest'; hence my description of his skin colour. Plutarch also speaks of Alexander exuding a strange sweet smell: 'I have read in Aristoxenus' memoirs (a Greek writer on philosophy ethics and music, roughly a contemporary of Alexander) that Alexander's skin was sweet smelling; his breath gave off a peculiar fragrance'. The Greek *Alexander Romance* (*AR* (α) II, 15) presents Alexander as being short: 'the Persians looked in amazement at Alexander because of his small stature but they did not know the Celestial destiny hidden in that little vessel'. Moreover, I imagined Alexander with flowing long unruly hair and a cowlick at the front after Hellenistic representations of him; this image also informs the style of Colin Farrell acting the Macedonian king in Oliver Stone's film *Alexander* (2004).

In *Blind Date*, Roxane is clearly not impressed with his physical appearance, which she seems to regard with disappointment and even shock at times. Despite this, she overlooks his looks and seems to be won over by his royal standing, wealth and ambition.

Alexander drinks too much wine at the picnic. His propensity to drink heavily emerges a number of times in accounts of his life by the Alexander-historians.

In the radio interview we find a young Alexander just returned from competing in the Olympic Games – a deed accounted for in the *Alexander Romance* I, 18–19. In the interview he comes across as exceptionally confident and assured of his abilities for one so young. He is precocious and convinced of his future military success and ability to rule the known world. Plutarch too describes him as having adventurous spirit and lofty ambitions; as someone not being interested in the riches and comfort but up for the struggle, guided by an unrelenting ambition to push the boundaries of his kingdom.

In the radio interview Alexander talks about his taming of Bucephalus – his faithful and much-loved horse. Bucephalus is so beloved that Alexander brings him to the picnic with Roxane and declares his love for him much to Roxane's consternation. As a matter of fact, Plutarch (*Life of Alexander* 61, 1) describes Alexander as being 'plunged into grief at his death and felt he had lost nothing less than a friend and comrade' when Bucephalus dies after being injured in the battle against Porus at River Hydaspes.

The taming of Bucephalus that Alexander recounts in his radio interview was a proud and defining moment for him. It is my favourite Alexander story contained in the *Alexander Romance* and in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*. For me this story gives the best insight into the character of the young Alexander and his determination to outdo his father Phillip. He has done what his father could not: he pushes beyond the boundaries of what others think possible – as he does over and over again through his short life. Following Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 6, 1–5, I consider his method of taming Bucephalus by persuasion and physical strength as a metaphor for how he successfully tames and forges alliances with these he conquers. In Bucephalus I think Alexander sees himself reflected – strong, brave, loyal and incredibly resilient. He also sees reflected back to him his own superior ability to conquer and control. Taming Bucephalus sets him on his path towards world domination: Alexander makes it clear in the interview that, while he builds on the successes of his father, his ambitions and the scope of his achievements are greater.

Lastly, I make reference in the radio interview to his recognition of his renowned teacher Aristotle, from whom he gets his appreciation of philosophy and learning. Alexander is open to the ideas and teachings of the peoples he meets during his exploits; maybe Aristotle's teachings and influence instilled in him a love of education that helped to curb his excesses of violence – at least in his early career. Moreover, we should consider that education was associated with self-control and restraint in the time of Plutarch, who acknowledges the positive impact of Aristotle's tutoring on Alexander's fiery temperament, allowing the Macedonian to challenge it to good effect.

April Probert's Work Report

The inspiration for my first piece, *Olympias' recension*, was my disappointment at the portrayal of Olympias within the book. She is changed from an intelligent and strongly independent woman into a Hellenized Candide, gullible and easily taken advantage of. I included lines from Richard Stoneman's translation of the *Alexander Romance* and tried to rewrite her encounter with Nectanebo to give a better representation of Olympias.

My other two pieces were mainly influenced by my feelings on the character of Alexander within the *Romance*. During his adventures in the land of darkness Alexander shows a very callous nature towards the incredible creatures that he finds there: he tries to kill many of them or he allows them to die through neglect. The violence and destruction of Alexander towards indigenous creatures made me think about the way that people can sometimes interact with video games with the same lack of empathy, which can mirror how some people, who identify themselves with the label 'gamers', interact with real people. I then compared positive and negative stereotypes about gamers to the personality of the *Romance's* Alexander.

Graveyard Smash at the Monster Mash was mainly inspired by the joy I got from the funnier parts of the *Romance*, particularly Alexander's infiltration of Darius' camp disguised as his own messenger.

Michael Evans' Work report

The inspiration for the piece about Alexander's baldness came from my study of both the historical Alexander and the Alexander of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Romance*. In particular, the paucity of contemporary sources seems to leave plenty of room for idle speculation and entertaining but silly conspiracy theories, hence the genesis of the work.

I was intrigued by the homogeneity of contemporary physical depictions of Alexander. Dr. Taietti explained that a number of surviving busts can be readily identified as Alexander because of the consistent tilt of the head and *anastole* hairstyle. This seemed to suggest that a uniformity of appearance might be due to insecurity on Alexander's own part – he instructed his artists to depict him a certain way, or they may have self-censored and flattered him out of fear of his wrath. I wondered what form Alexander's insecurity about his appearance might take, and premature male-pattern baldness seemed obvious. As a man who had luscious centre-parted locks in his teens but was bald by his mid-twenties, I felt I could draw on personal experience in this particular matter!

The structure of the story seemed obvious – a chronology of Alexander's life, with key events recast. At the beginning of the story, I needed to establish Alexander's fear of baldness. What better way than to compare him with his uglier father, and who better to do so than Aristotle himself? The doubt over Alexander's true paternity comes from the *Alexander Romance* and its Ptolemaic Egyptian author's desire to Egyptianise the young king. Homer's use of the phrase 'long-haired Achaeans' as one of his descriptors of the Greek contingent at Troy was particularly useful to me, as was Alexander's retort to Anaximenes that he preferred to be Homer's Thersites than his poets' Achilles (though I may have had Brad Pitt's 2004 portrayal in mind also). I have always enjoyed Diogenes' famously contemptuous remark to Alexander, so I took the opportunity to throw in a physical insult on the part of the old Cynic. Alexander's foolhardy leap into the freezing Cydnus was, to me, evocative of Achilles' immersion in the Styx. The classic baldness-concealing tactic of wearing an oversized hat seemed to chime with Alexander's later adoption of Persian dress. (Dr. Taietti later told me that there is a Hellenic folk tradition of Alexander as having donkey's ears concealed by a headdress, but I was unaware of this when I wrote – a strange coincidence).

The death of the real Callisthenes seemed to be a good place to end the narrative. Indeed, historians have long speculated as to why this court-appointed historian fell from grace and met an early demise. I tried to come up with

an answer, positioning him as a threat to Alexander's meticulously-crafted legacy.

The most concerning thing about writing this piece was how effortless I found it to argue in bad faith, to adopt an entertaining but historically meritless point of view, and to cherry-pick and distort historical facts in its support. Having gone through this process, I think I will be better able to spot this behaviour in other authors. Ultimately, what I learned from writing this piece is that one must be cautious in both reading and writing.

BIOS

Sarah Crompton

Sarah works as an Occupational Therapist. She is a complete amateur lover of history – the more ancient the better. Her participation in a University of Liverpool Continuing Education Course led by Dr Guen Taietti has introduced her to Ancient Greece – its myths, traditions, art and culture. It has, and continues, to take her on a fascinating journey back in time to a world very different, and yet very much like our own. Sarah has stated that if she had her life over again, she would have become an Archaeologist.

Michael Evans

Michael came to Classics later in life and has studied several modules at the University of Liverpool's Continuing Education department. He is fascinated by how much we owe to ancient cultures. As well as history and literature modules, Michael has also studied Ancient Greek and Latin (from scratch) with Dr Taietti. His ambition is to become fluent in Ancient Greek and Latin some day.

April Probert

April graduated from the University of Liverpool with a BEng(Hons) in Mechanical Engineering in 2017. She has since pursued her interests in history, languages and philosophy in the Continuing Education courses available at the University of Liverpool. She has a particular interest in ancient languages, having studied Latin, Coptic and Hieroglyphics; and she is now learning some Ancient Greek too.

Guendalina Daniela Maria Taietti

Guen is an Italian Classicist based in Greece with an interest in Alexander the Great, Macedonian History, and in the study of Animals in Antiquity. Guen has worked as a Classics teacher both in schools and at University level in Italy, Greece, the UK, and China; currently she is teaching Classics in the Continuing Education Department of the University of Liverpool and she is participating in a research project on the *Alexander Romance* at the University of Haifa. Alongside her research, she is enthusiastic about making Classics more inclusive and accessible to a wider audience, travelling, and learning new languages and cultures. In her free time, she is an amateur runner and is committed to the protection of the environment and animals.

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