

# THE CASTING OF JULIAN THE APOSTATE ‘IN THE LIKENESS’ OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT: A TOPOS IN ANTIQUE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ITS MODERN ECHOES\*

*Fluellen:* Alexander, God knows ... [did] kill his best friend Cleitus.

*Gower:* Our king is not like him in that: he never killed any of his friends.

*Fluellen:* It is not done well, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made and finished. I speak but in the figures and comparisons of it ...

[*Henry V*: iv.7]

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*Abstract.* Parallels between Julian the Apostate and Alexander the Great were drawn repeatedly in antiquity. Although the comparison instantiates a familiar topos in the repertoire of Roman imperial panegyrists and historiographers, in Julian’s case a unique complexity attaches to the ‘Alexander comparison’ on several counts. Close reading discloses lines of influence and reaction holding between the earlier and later testimonies, and what some of them postulate reflects an awareness of observations made about Alexander in Julian’s writings that indicate a strong interest in him on the emperor’s own part. Moreover, the image of Julian as an obsessive ‘Alexander-emulator’ transmitted in one strand of the ancient tradition has a modern counterpart in some scholarship which ascribes to him a deepening psychological inclination to identify with, or to rival, Alexander. This paper aims both to explicate the formation and development of the theme of Julian’s ‘likeness to Alexander’ as an antique literary construct, and to review the modern representation of him as a passionate ‘Alexander-emulator’, arranged in four sections: I. Introduction; II. Precedents and parallels: the ‘likeness to Alexander’ theme as a literary topos; III. The passage of the Julian–Alexander comparison from rhetoric to historiography in the external testimonies: (i) Libanius; (ii) Ammianus; (iii) the Christian testimonies (Gregory Nazianzen, Philostorgius and Socrates Scholasticus); IV. Alexander’s image in Julian’s writings: the hypothesis of emulation reviewed.

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## I. Introduction

Parallels were repeatedly drawn in antiquity between the cases of Julian the Apostate and Alexander the Great; attested first in rhetorical contexts during Julian’s reign and shortly after his death, the practice recurs in variant forms in late-fourth and fifth century historical narratives, pagan and Christian. *Per se*, the comparison instantiates a familiar trope in the repertoire of

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\* I thank the Editors, Dr David Hunt and the anonymous referees for helpful comments.

Roman imperial panegyric and historiography: a fair number of earlier emperors had been represented as resembling Alexander in traits of character, or as aspiring to emulate his achievements. But Julian's case is quite exceptional for the range and intertextual relationships of the testimonies at issue, for the variety and intensity of the associations with Alexander that they postulate—and for the significance some modern Julianic scholars attach to them. Certainly, if some of the retrospective antique reports are credited, more than casual evocation of the 'Alexander style' was involved. In his *Monody*, for instance, Julian's friend and admirer Libanius mourned him as one who had taken the precedent deeply to heart: Alexander had been 'dear to him, allowing him no sleep' (*Or.* 17.17). The image of the insomniac admirer was a fleeting aside in the speech, and studiously derivative,<sup>1</sup> but the underlying notion that Julian had idealized and tried to emulate Alexander from a distance of seven centuries recurs elsewhere in Libanius and in later historiographic texts—and on the face of things, it attaches nicely to testimony from Julian himself: at one time, he avowed, the thought of trying to rival Alexander, and of failing in the attempt, had used to make him tremble (*ad Them.* 253ab). We shall return later to the detail of that avowal; just what it implies about Alexander's exemplary standing in Julian's eyes is a delicate question. But it undeniably betokens a keen interest in Alexander that registered often in his writings, and some of the 'psychologizing' claims subsequently made on that score in antiquity have modern counterparts in a strand of scholarship which judges Julian not so much interested in Alexander as gripped by an obsessive wish to emulate him.

In Anglophone scholarship the roots of this idea run back a century, to a review by Norman Baynes of Seeck's account of Julian in his *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*;<sup>2</sup> whereas Seeck had reckoned the talk of Julian's modelling himself on Alexander a rhetorical fabrication, Baynes argued for its basis in historical reality on the strength of details in fifth century Christian historians' reports. In variant forms, the idea has figured in studies of Julian from the 1970s onwards. It was touched upon, albeit briefly and warily, in Bowersock's biography. Bowersock looked more to Julian's own testimony than the later reports adduced by Baynes, but he did not doubt that Julian had adopted Alexander as 'one of his great models'—and in a discussion of Julian's *Caesars*, he hinted that something more than a wish to emu-

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<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Baynes, (1955) 346–7 (an excerpt from a review of Seeck, *Geschichte* IV (Berlin 1911), first published in *EHR* 27 (1912) 755–60, disputing remarks by Seeck *ibid.* pp. 341 and 507). On Baynes' related claim that the *imitatio Alexandri* ascribed to Alexander Severus in the *HA* discloses the *Vita Alexandri* a work of propaganda composed in Julian's reign, see Syme (1971) 98–9.

late his military success was involved. The fictional Alexander in *Caesars* (325b) seeks to rebut the charge of harsh treatment of men he suspected of disloyalty by insisting that he had only punished the guilty, and had repented for any excessive harshness even in their cases. On Bowersock's view, Julian was here projecting onto the figure of Alexander his own 'obsession with the problem of excessive severity'; the words Alexander speaks were obliquely expressing anxieties and resentments that Julian had come to harbour at Antioch, as his relations with the local population deteriorated.<sup>3</sup> Athanassiadi was more emphatic on the matter. She represented Julian's sense of affinity with Alexander as a solipsistic notion that gripped him late in his reign, as his hopes for a rapid pagan revival began to falter. She envisaged a striking change in his attitude to Alexander, a swing from 'bitter' criticism in the late 350s to a self-identifying 'obsession' with him by the time he set out for Persia in 363; the invasion was a venture 'conceived in terms of the heroic exploits of Alexander', the last refuge of a ruler 'mesmerized by an Alexandrian vision of Persian conquest [who] found it more and more difficult to maintain his contact with reality' and ended up 'totally estranged'.<sup>4</sup>

On that score, Athanassiadi's picture chimed with studies of Julian's Persian campaign published by Wirth and Marcone in the late 1970s. Modern accounts of the campaign have usually construed it as intended to last one season and as directed to limited military and diplomatic purposes, on the presupposition that an attempt to conquer and permanently annex all of Persia would have been quite unfeasible in the conditions obtaining.<sup>5</sup> Wirth argued, though, that the infeasibility of total conquest had not deterred Julian from launching a project for open-ended campaigning and cultural assimilation modelled on Alexander's eastern conquests; and he speculated that Julian's death was effectively suicide—a wish to fall in battle rather than face up to the enterprise's failure. Marcone, for his part, construed the campaign as an attempt to achieve an Alexander-like military success that would justify Julian's trust in the gods and reinvigorate his programme for a pagan restoration.<sup>6</sup> The hypothesis that Julian envisaged the annexation and cultural assimilation of Persia remains controversial,<sup>7</sup> but it has been guardedly

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<sup>3</sup> Bowersock (1978) 16, 23–5, 78, 101–4, with Bowersock (1982) 161–2. I dispute this interpretation of *Caes.* 325b below, pp. 97–8.

<sup>4</sup> Athanassiadi[-Fowden] (1981) 192–3 (citing Baynes), 222–5.

<sup>5</sup> See Ridley (1973) 317–30, Matthews (1989) 138–9.

<sup>6</sup> Wirth (1978) 455–507 *passim*, esp. 459–60 and 483–90; Marcone (1979) 341–5.

<sup>7</sup> For subsequent reaffirmations of the campaign's more limited aims and intended duration, see below, p. 99 and n. 170.

re-argued lately<sup>8</sup>—and the view that he was psychologically inclined to identify with Alexander has gained wider currency, the passing objections of some doubters notwithstanding.<sup>9</sup> A modern commentary on Ammianus speaks of the 'fact' that 'Julian venerated and desired to rival Alexander',<sup>10</sup> and the judgement seems gnominically endorsed in Fowden's description of him as 'one of the Alexander legend's prize victims'.<sup>11</sup> The imprint of Wirth's arguments is clear, too, in Rosen's important recent biography of Julian: it pictures him near the end of his reign as a 'Verlierer' adrift in Persia—a 'lost man' in doomed pursuit of 'd[ie] Spuren Alexanders'.<sup>12</sup>

In what follows, I aim both to explicate Julian's 'likeness to Alexander' as a theme in antique rhetoric and historiography, and to review the modern hypothesis that he had indeed adopted Alexander as a model whose achievements he passionately strove to emulate. The two issues are formally separable: what was postulated retrospectively in antiquity about Julian's sense of affinity with Alexander merits study in its own right for its literary and historical interest, irrespective of its truth or falsity—and the crucial test for the modern hypothesis lies more with Julian's own testimony than the later tradition. But in practice, the issues often overlap: some of the later testimonies, even if they are fictive, reflect awareness of pertinent remarks in his writings, and closely studied they can yield insights into the historical as well as the legendary Julian. I shall first place the external testimonies' association of Julian with Alexander in a broader Roman imperial setting, observing its points of contact and difference with a pre-existing cultural and literary practice (Section II). Then (III) I pass to close discussion of the specific parallels postulated in these testimonies, with an eye to their terms of comparison and intended purports, their historical and literary contexts and their intertextual relationships, and their value as evidence of the historical reality of Alexander-imitation in Julian's publicity. Lastly (IV), I review the representation of Julian as a passionate emulator of Alexander in its ancient and modern variants, measuring it against what Julian's own writings disclose about his interest in him. To be sure, Julian's own observations and professions on that score must themselves be read in their literary and historical contexts, and in the light of his reliably attested public actions; but they remain privileged evidence of his thought and motivation.

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<sup>8</sup> Seager (1997) 262–6.

<sup>9</sup> For doubts, see Smith, (1995) 12–13; Lane Fox (1997) 249, 251–2.

<sup>10</sup> den Boeft et al. (1991) 112. See also Franco (1997).

<sup>11</sup> Fowden (1993) 27 (cf. p. 22: for Julian, Alexander stood 'not just [for] military glory but for cultural domination').

<sup>12</sup> Rosen (2006) 335–6, and ch. 9 ('Der Verlierer') *passim*, esp. 360.

## II. Precedents and Parallels: the ‘Likeness to Alexander’ Theme as a Literary Topos

As an emblem of youthful energy and invincible martial glory, the figure of the Ἀνίκητος Alexander always held a unique glamour in antiquity, and numerous Roman emperors—not to mention Hellenistic kings, and the odd late Republican magnate—either sought to evoke his style in their own publicity, or at least were flatteringly associated with him by contemporaries.<sup>13</sup> Rhetorical handbooks commended the ‘likeness to Alexander’ theme as a standard ploy for orators addressing emperors,<sup>14</sup> and it came easily to imperial biographers and historians to evoke the trope to glamorize a ruler’s memory.<sup>15</sup>

Such *comparatio* will potentially embrace any report that associates an emperor with Alexander on any ground. Moderns seek to differentiate variant connotations within the theme:<sup>16</sup> a report that implies a conscious effort on an emperor’s part to copy or evoke the precedent of Alexander in particular features of public style or action is said to attribute ‘Alexander-imitation’ to him; ‘Alexander-emulation’ points to something deeper—an impulse to rival Alexander’s achievements. In practice, though, imprecision or allusiveness in the evidence often elides the distinctions between the categories. On a strict test, anyway, the historicity of imitation or emulation of Alexander by a given emperor will only be conclusively established by his own written testimony, or by clear contemporary epigraphic or numismatic evidence. Any retrospective literary report that postulates *imitatio* or *aemulatio* must always be appraised with an eye to its particular historical and literary contexts; the writer could as easily be inventing or repeating fictions as recording facts.

In Julian’s case, not all of the testimonies at issue postulate any conscious intention to copy Alexander. Of those that do so, some might only mean to suggest occasional imitation of the ‘Alexander style’; others imply a deeper impulse to emulate. On each count, historical and literary precedents could

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<sup>13</sup> On the Hellenistic precedents, see Bohm (1989) and Stewart (1993); for Republican precedents, see Weippert (1972) and Green (1989) 200–2. Plut. *Pomp.* 2.2 represents Pompey as a conscious imitator; for modern assessments of the case, and the more ambiguous cases of Caesar and Mark Antony, see Green (1989) 197, Stewart (2003) 57 and Isager (1993) 77–8. For discussion of the representation of Alexander in Republican and early imperial Latin literary contexts, see Spencer (2002).

<sup>14</sup> *Menander Rhetor*, ed. Russell and Wilson (1981), 92.

<sup>15</sup> Or sometimes, in the case of a ‘bad’ emperor, to imply that the comparison was inept: see e.g. Suetonius’ critical (but in my view, probably factually based) reports in *Gaius* 52, *Nero* 19.

<sup>16</sup> See Green (1989) 194, whose classification is adopted here with modifications.

colour the reports. The evocation of Alexander in imperial publicity was a practice that reached back to the founding emperor: for a time, Augustus used a portrait-head of Alexander as his official seal (Suet. *DA* 50); and soon after his victory at Actium, he had personally crowned Alexander's mummy at Alexandria with a golden diadem. The crowning emphasized Augustus' claim to Alexander's legacy in terms that flattered Greek self-esteem, but Suetonius' report of the occasion has a Roman triumphal nuance,<sup>17</sup> and a political calculation arguably made Augustus wary of over-fulsome *imitatio* in his publicity at Rome. The brute facts of Alexander's kingship and Greekness rendered him a provocatively unRoman model in traditionalists' eyes;<sup>18</sup> a chauvinist strand in Italian opinion chafed at an anti-Roman subtext to the glorification of his memory by Greeks; and under Caesar's dictatorship, Cicero had pointedly cited Alexander as an emblem of monarchic tyranny.<sup>19</sup> But these were transitory hindrances. By Trajan's day, no one disputed that Roman emperors were monarchs, and in an empire in which Greeks were serving as senators and winning consulships and governorships, imperial publicists could evoke Alexander's conquest of Persia to promote an image of Romans and Greeks as fellow-Mediterraneans faced with an alien enemy in the East.<sup>20</sup> Literary interest in the Alexander-comparison quickened at the time, and not just in connexion with Trajan: in the extant evidence, for instance, a famous story ascribing Alexander-emulation to Caesar (a story to which Julian himself alludes) is first told by Suetonius and Plutarch;<sup>21</sup> and Suetonius supplies our earliest testimony to Augustus' veneration of the mummy.

The 'likeness to Alexander' theme always had particular appeal for court writers and historians in connexion with emperors who contemplated aggressive campaigns beyond the eastern frontier: Trajan, Caracalla and Alexander Severus, were all remembered as 'emulators'.<sup>22</sup> And from the ear-

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<sup>17</sup> Suet., *DA*.18: Augustus had pointedly declined to pass on to view the sarcophagi of the Ptolemies, mere 'corpses' in his eyes.

<sup>18</sup> Kienast (1969) 430–55.

<sup>19</sup> Chauvinism: Livy, 9.16.9ff, with Ogilvie's comm. *ad loc.*; Cic. *Att.* 13.28.3, with Fears (1974) 118–21.

<sup>20</sup> Spawforth (1994) 242–3.

<sup>21</sup> Suet. *DJ* 7 and Plut. *Caes.* 11 report the anecdote in variant forms, discussed in Green (1989) 195. Julian's allusion (*Caes.* 322c) follows the Plutarchian version, significantly: the doubts of Bouffartigue (1992) 285–93 notwithstanding, it is safe to assume extensive *direct* reading of the *Parallel Lives* by Julian. By contrast, he probably never read Suetonius' *Lives* (Plutarch's imperial biographies, now mostly lost, were an obvious alternative: see Bowersock (1982) 171; Smith (1995) 228–9, n. 48.

<sup>22</sup> Trajan: e.g. Dio 68.29.1 and 30.1, with Syme (1958) 770–1; Caracalla: Dio 77.7.1; 78.7–8; Ps.-Victor, *Epitome* 21.4, with Stewart (2003) 61 and Potter (2004) 142–4; Alexander

lier third century onwards the appeal gained a sharper edge, inasmuch as the Sassanian kings who now ruled Persia were reportedly seeking to restore the old Achaemenid empire destroyed by Alexander.<sup>23</sup> Military engagements in other spheres could still prompt the Alexander-comparison, of course: in 269/70, for instance, a city in Greek Asia struck Alexander-coins in honour of Claudius II (the emperor from whom Julian's own dynasty would later claim descent), to celebrate his victory over the Goths.<sup>24</sup> But when the publicity of Tetrarchic and Constantinian emperors played on the theme, it was often in connexion with the 'Sassanian problem'. In 298, Diocletian's respectful treatment of the captured wife of King Narses was perhaps meant to evoke Alexander's courtesy towards Darius' womenfolk;<sup>25</sup> in 326, amidst rumours that Constantine was planning a Persian invasion, a gold medallion struck to commemorate his Vicennalia portrayed him in the 'Alexander-style';<sup>26</sup> and in 340, only fifteen years before Julian's accession as Caesar, his cousin Constantius II (currently at war with Shapur II) was flatteringly compared to Alexander in the work of court-literature known to moderns as *Alexander's Itinerary*.<sup>27</sup> And the theme would persist well after Julian's day, in panegyrics of the Theodosian house: the teenage emperor Honorius, Claudian predicted, would become 'as great [as Alexander], lording it over the Indians, worshipped by the Mede'; around the same time, a court-historian was drawing his attention to the example of Aurelian, 'scarcely different from Alexander'.<sup>28</sup>

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Severus: *HA Sev. Alex.* 5.1–2, 25.9 and 30–31, with Rösger (1988) 885–906 and Gascou (1981) 231–40 (on an inscription from Giufi); cf. Dio 80.18.1–3, with Millar (1964) Appendix V (the 'Alexander-daimon' abroad in Thrace in AD 221).

<sup>23</sup> Whether the founding Sassanid Ardashir actually held or publicized this aim in the 230s is controversial: Dio 80.4.1 and Herodian 6.6.6 assert that he did, perhaps misleadingly projecting a Roman thought-pattern onto him (see Potter (2004) 223–5); cf. Fowden (1993) 24–36, favouring the reality of 'Sassanian universalism' from the start. The 'Achaemenid heritage' certainly featured in Sassanian propaganda by Julian's day: see Amm. Marc. 17.5.5, reporting Shapur II's letter of AD 358.

<sup>24</sup> Stewart (2003) 63, on a coin series from Sagalassos.

<sup>25</sup> Malalas p. 308, 6 [= Dodgeon and Lieu (1991) 130]; cf. Plut. *Alex.* 21. For a Julianic parallel, see Amm. Marc. 25.4.15 [= **A4** below]. Note also *Pan. Lat.* 10.10.3–6 [AD 289?], on the 'Alexander-like' diplomacy of Maximian and Diocletian; Ps-Victor, *Epit.* 40.17, on Galerius' 'Alexander-like' serpent-parent.

<sup>26</sup> War rumours: Optatianus Porfyrius, *Carm.* 18.4 (AD 324/5); medallion: Euseb. *VC* 4.15.1, with Cameron and Hall *ad loc.*

<sup>27</sup> Lane Fox (1997) 240–7.

<sup>28</sup> Claud. *IV Cons. Hon.*, 257–8, 379 (AD 398), Ps-Victor, *Epit.* 35.2; cf. Them. *Or.* 16.204c [AD 383] (Arcadius); *Pan. Lat.* 2.8.4 (AD 389) (Theodosius).

A bald claim that one's emperor surpassed Alexander's martial prowess might ring hollow, but nuance could circumvent the risk. Fourth century panegyrists amplify on the comparison to turn it to their subject's advantage; they observe of Constantius, say, that he commanded a finer army than Alexander's; of Constantine, that he made better use of a smaller one and engaged with a more formidable enemy; of Theodosius, that he had begun soldiering at a younger age.<sup>29</sup> Or one could affirm that the emperor being praised was more meritorious in the round, by picking up on the charges levelled at Alexander by popularizing philosophers and rhetoricians in their *controversiae* and declamations: they had long argued that there were aspects to his character and conduct—an inner discontentedness, vainglorious rashness and arrogance, an intemperance issuing in bouts of drunken, murderous rage—that rendered him a far from perfect regal exemplar.<sup>30</sup> This twist to the 'likeness to Alexander' theme, too, had long since become a literary *topos*,<sup>31</sup> and the fourth century writers often exploit it: they invite their readers to compare Alexander's drunkenness with Constantine's sobriety; or to observe that his boastfulness and cruelty thankfully found no echo in Constantius; or to contrast the self-centredness of his military ambitions with the 'philanthropy' of the brother-emperors Valens and Valentinian.<sup>32</sup>

Against this background, it is no surprise that Julian in his turn was flatteringly compared with Alexander in rhetoric (and some have claimed, on medallions)<sup>33</sup> at the time of his own war against Shapur II. In his case, youthfulness added to the glamour: Constantine had been in his fifties when represented in the 'Alexander-style' on his vicennial medallion, Trajan in his

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<sup>29</sup> Constantius: *Itinerarium Alex.* 4 (ix); Constantine: *Pan. Lat.* 12.5.1–3; Theodosius: *Pan. Lat.* 2.8.5.

<sup>30</sup> For the bearing of Stoic ethics in this connexion (and a compelling refutation of the hypothesis of a single and uniformly hostile 'Stoic (or Peripatetic, or Cynic) view' of Alex.), see Brunt (1977) 19–48, with Fears (1974) 113–30. Stoneman (2003) 325–45 is clear on the interplay between 'philosophic' criticism and the Alexander *exemplum* in rhetorical discourse.

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. Tac. *Ann.* 2.73, ostensibly reporting a comparison made soon after Germanicus' death. The prince is extravagantly mourned by his bereft admirers as Alexander's equal as a fighting soldier—but a less rashly impulsive strategist, they are made to add, and a better man for being more even-tempered with his officers, and more self-controlled in his private life. For recent discussion of the passage, see Gissel (2001) 286–90.

<sup>32</sup> Euseb. *VC* 7.1; 8.2); *Itinerarium Al.* 4 (ix); Themistius, *Orr.* 6.80a (AD 364), 15.193a–b (AD 381).

<sup>33</sup> Alföldi (1962) postulated that a contorniate medallion was issued at Rome in late 362/early 363 on which a portrait-head of Julian as Alexander' figured; I shall argue elsewhere (paper forthcoming) that Alföldi was quite mistaken in this particular.



sixties when he invaded Parthia; Julian, like Alexander, enjoyed outstanding military success on first coming to power in his early twenties, and died at thirty-one or so.<sup>34</sup> This chiming of contingent biographical details came to matter especially for his later admirers, who had to accommodate a blatant difference between the cases: Julian's expedition had failed disastrously. In the wishful eyes of pagan authors who liked to picture him as a hero snatched away in the prime of life, his death in faraway Mesopotamia at the same age as Alexander carried a tragic resonance that could encourage a more elaborate exercise in literary parallelism. A popular notion always persisted, for instance, that Alexander had been treacherously poisoned by a Macedonian hand—and in the wake of Julian's death, some were quick to hint that the fatal spear had been cast by a disaffected Christian within the Roman ranks.<sup>35</sup>

In principle, then, the combined force of a literary convention and some adventitious biographical similarities might suffice to explain the ancient writers' readiness to connect Julian with Alexander. But on a closer view, the issue is more complex. The grounds of comparison adduced are distinctly varied: there are significant differences of emphasis even between authors who use the 'likeness to Alexander' theme to commend Julian (and there were also detractors who drew the comparison to a very different purpose). In its usual application in praise of Roman emperors, the Alexander-comparison turned principally on the ruler's claim to invincible excellence as a military commander. Julian's admirers did not neglect to praise his merits or bravery as a general, but even in his lifetime that was not the only point at issue, and after his death it was manifestly problematic: the stark fact was that his career had ended in a humiliating military catastrophe. Yet that did not deter those who wrote on him with hindsight from persisting with the comparison. Admirers would defend its aptness by picking up on other estimable character traits traditionally ascribed to Alexander—his phenomenal energy and self-challenging drive, his regal generosity and chivalrous 'greatness of soul', his respect for philosophy and his love of Homer. The heart of the matter, on this view, was not so much a putative wish on Julian's part for military success on a scale that rivalled Alexander's as a genuine affinity of character conjoining the pair. In the reports of Julian's detractors, this notion was to be reformulated with a subversive

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<sup>34</sup> Julian was 23/4 when appointed Caesar in November 355, and 31/2 when he died (Amm. Marc. 25.3.23: 'anno aetatis altero et tricesimo'). The precise year and month of his birth is debated (see Paschoud (1979) 74–5 (= n. 14, on Zos. 3.5.3): 331 is preferable to 332.

<sup>35</sup> Lib. *Or.* 18.274 (on which see below, p. 61); cf. Amm. Marc. 25.6.6. Later Christian sources warmed to the theme: the claim is well discussed in Paschoud (1979) 203–6 (= n. 84).

slant: Christian writers vehemently hostile to the Apostate's memory were quite prepared to represent him as an emperor who had tried to emulate Alexander's achievements out of a sense of spiritual affinity with him; but as they represented it, the affinity existed only as a delusion in Julian's mind.<sup>36</sup>

How well the retrospective antique representation of Julian as a passionate Alexander-emulator corresponds with Julian's own testimony is a question I defer for now; I wish first to scrutinize the external testimonies in their own right, and their full variety. On close reading, their evidential value will be found to lie mainly in what they disclose about Julian's 'likeness to Alexander' as a developing literary construct; whether any of them does anything to establish the historicity of even casual Alexander-imitation by Julian is a matter for debate.

### III. The Julian–Alexander Comparison from Rhetoric to Historiography: the External Testimonies Analysed

As the evidence survives, five authors are chiefly at issue. Three (Libanius, Ammianus, and Gregory Nazianzen) were contemporaries of Julian; the others (Philostorgius and Socrates Scholasticus) were writing in the fifth century. We can best explain the passage of Julian's 'likeness to Alexander' from rhetoric to historiography by analysing the testimonies of each of the five in turn: the pagan orator and the pagan historian first, then their Christian counterparts. On what grounds did they compare the two cases? What were their individual presuppositions and purposes? What lines of influence, or reaction, ran within the five? Our answers to these questions will inform our judgement of the value of those testimonies which assert or imply imitation or emulation of Alexander.

#### III.i. Libanius

Libanius is central to our enquiry: as the evidence stands,<sup>37</sup> he was the first to draw the Julian–Alexander comparison; he drew it more often, and with

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<sup>36</sup> See below, pp. 73–85.

<sup>37</sup> Themistius and Himerius wrote panegyrics of Julian, both now lost: that of Themistius (attested by Lib. *Epp.* 818 and 1430) perhaps celebrated Julian's investiture as *cos.* IV on 1 Jan. 363; Him. *Or.* 52 (Colonna) survives only as a title. Alexander's name does not figure in the extant *Gratiarum actio* (= *Pan. Lat.* 3) of Mamertinus, delivered on 1 Jan. 362. At a pinch, Mamertinus might be credited with an oblique allusion to him in a passage praising Julian's victory at Strasbourg in 357 (*Pan. Lat.* 3.4.3): Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 399 n. 27 suggest that his phrase 'uno proelio debellatur' may recall the Alexander '[qui] rem gessit proelii unius eventu' of *Pan. Lat.* 12.5.3 (addressed to Constantine). For a later,

more elaborate twists, than any of the later writers; and his testimony, we shall see, has significantly coloured some of the later historiographic reports. Moreover, Libanius could claim personal friendship with Julian; he corresponded with him; he was living at Antioch while Julian and his court were based there, and some of the speeches in which he compared him to Alexander were speeches addressed to Julian himself at that time, or shortly afterwards.<sup>38</sup> On these scores, Libanius' case demands particularly close attention; if he was drawing the comparison with encouragement or prompting from the emperor or court-intimates, his testimony would constitute contemporary evidence of Alexander-imitation in Julian's imperial publicity.

Libanius addressed four speeches to Julian in the space of a year (July 362–May/June 363). All four were composed at Antioch, in a volatile local political context to which the writer, as a native and resident of the city, was especially sensitive. Two were panegyrics commissioned by Julian, one soon after his arrival there in July 362 (*Or.* 13), the other to inaugurate his consulship of 363 (*Or.* 12); neither mentions Alexander. The third (*Or.* 14) was an appeal addressed to Julian on behalf of a disgraced friend of the author in autumn 362. The fourth, the *Embassy to Julian* (*Or.* 15), written in May/June 363, was intended for despatch to Julian on campaign in Mesopotamia, but was never delivered to him—he died in the interim.<sup>39</sup> The Julian–Alexander comparison figures in both of these speeches, and it recurs in two later ones that Libanius composed to commemorate Julian over the next two years: the brief *Monody* (*Or.* 17; early 364), and the long *Epitaphios* (*Or.* 18; mid 365).<sup>40</sup> All told, there are eight passages at issue; we shall take them in chronological order of composition, commenting first on them individually, then on their significance in the round.<sup>41</sup> For ease of reference in the discussion, the passages are labelled 'L1', 'L2', etc.

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indisputable, application of the Julian–Alexander parallel in connexion with the victory at Strasbourg (Zosimus 3.3.3), see below, p. 71.

<sup>38</sup> On all aspects of Libanius' Julianic orations and his personal relations with the emperor, Wiemer (1995) is fundamental; see also Scholl (1994) and Swain (2004) 394–400.

<sup>39</sup> Wiemer (1995) 221–7 establishes May/June 363 as the date of composition of *Or.* 15.

<sup>40</sup> For their composition-dates, see Wiemer (1995) 251ff and 260ff.

<sup>41</sup> I quote from Norman's Loeb translation of the 'Julianic Orations' (1969), occasionally adapted. Excluded from the list, as insignificant, is the conceit alluding to Alexander in one of Libanius' earliest letters to Julian, *Ep.* 35 Förster (38 Norman), addressed to him as Constantius' Caesar in faraway Gaul in AD 358. Congratulating Julian on his victory at Strasbourg (357) and on his own (now lost) report of the battle, Libanius says that Julian's triumph will now be commemorated by his own eloquence, '[whereas] Achilles needed Homer, and Alexander a set of Titans' (proverbial for their far-reaching voices). The conceit is a topos; it rests on the popular story of Alexander's envying Achilles his good fortune in having the incomparable Homer to immortalize his deeds, as reported

**L1** = *Or.* 14.34 (*On behalf of Aristophanes*, September/October 362)

Pleading for the restoration of the property and good name of Aristophanes of Corinth, a friend condemned for bribe-taking in 360 (by the authority of Constantius II, not Julian), Libanius recalls a story about Alexander: 'Despite his anger against Thebes, he showed respect to Pindar's descendants because of [his admiration for] Pindar's poems...' Aristophanes, then, whose uncles had been philosophers, can surely hope for helpful intervention in his case from Julian, who '[reveres philosophers] as he would his own parents'.

This passage needs only brief comment. The context is private: a speech written to help a friend, and not delivered in a public setting, but rather sent to Julian to read. (His letter of reply survives (*Ep.* 53 [97 Bidez]): it congratulates Libanius on his literary skill and promises help—but makes no mention of Alexander.) Insofar as **L1** likens Julian to Alexander, it is in virtue of a shared respect for *paideia*, poetic or philosophic; but there is no suggestion that he was modelling himself on Alexander. In the context, indeed, such a suggestion would be highly incongruous, because the particular action of Alexander commended to Julian's attention also inescapably evoked one of the darkest episodes in his entire career: notwithstanding his sparing of Pindar's descendants, Alexander's razing of Thebes and the mass-enslavement of its inhabitants in 335 BC were remembered in the tradition (and for that matter, in Julian's own writings) as acts of signal savagery.<sup>42</sup>

The *Embassy*—the speech dispatched to (but in the event, never received by) Julian in Mesopotamia—offers richer pickings; it draws the Alexander-comparison three times. Libanius wrote the piece in May or early June 363 on the assumption that the Persian campaign was faring well—and he wrote with a particular purpose. Julian's relationship with the populace at Antioch had deteriorated markedly during his stay there, and he had made it plain on his departure that the city would be receiving no favours from him in future. Libanius wrote the *Embassy* on the Antiochenes' behalf, in an effort to mend the breach: it appealed to Julian to give up his anger towards them.

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by Arrian (*Anab.* 1.12.1–2) and Plutarch (*Alex.* 15.8). Julian himself plays with this *topos ca.* AD 358 at *Or.* 2.54c (flattering Constantius II for 'deeds far worthier than [Alexander's] of Homer's trumpet') and at *Or.* 8.251a, in praise of Salutius, with a detail that echoes Arrian's version of the story (see below, p. 93 n. 158). Likewise, fourth century 'biographers' adduce the story to signal that the greatness of their subjects' achievements must pale on the page: it opens, e.g., Jerome's *Vita Hilarionis* and the *HA's Vita Probi* (both products of the 390s).

<sup>42</sup> Even basically favourable sources take a stark view of this episode: see, e.g., Plut. *Alex.* 11.6–13.3; Arr. *Anab.* 1.8–9; cf. Jul. *Caes.* 321d.

The three passages at issue in it (**L2**, **L3** and **L4**) need to be appraised against that background.<sup>43</sup>

**L2** = *Or.* 15.2 (*Embassy*)

Libanius asserts that the attention and eloquence that everyone once bestowed on other objects of renown has now devolved upon Julian; men's minds are no longer excited by stories of the Trojan War, or the Battle of Salamis, or 'the deeds of Alexander in his attack upon [the Persians]': 'Everyone [now] rejects all this as so much triviality, clings to the present, and delights to hear or tell of your daring, your invasion, your [river-]crossing ...'

**L3** = *Or.* 15.42–3 (*Embassy*)

'Alexander suffered much at the hands of the orators in Athens ... He was lord of all and could have massacred them, had he wished, but instead he welcomed them and let them be, granting this great favour to [the orator–politician] Demades. I would have cited this and many other examples, were it not that you [Julian] have performed deeds even more famous ... What characterized your philanthropy, on those occasions, was your patient endurance of the errors of your subjects.'

**L4** = *Or.* 15.79 (*Embassy*)

'Our city [i.e. Antioch] ... is a city of Macedonians, [a city] of Alexander, who ran the same courses that you run [*τὰ αὐτά σοι δραμόντος*] ... This city [now] makes its supplication to you ...'

If the *Embassy* had been delivered to Julian in Persia while he was still alive to read it, his literary sense would have recognized and relished **L2** for what it clearly was—a hyperbolic conceit to open the speech. Libanius did no more here than what the rhetoricians' handbooks advised for an oration of this sort, and what the panegyrists of Maximian, say, or Constantine, had done in theirs: 'Even Alexander now seems insignificant to me, O Emperor,' Maximian's had declared, 'when so many kings are your clients.'<sup>44</sup> No one has ever mistaken that for evidence that Maximian nurtured an obsessive ambition to rival Alexander. **L4**'s passing image of Alexander and Julian 'running the same courses' might seem more suggestive: the Greek phrase, *τὰ αὐτά σοι δραμόντος*, could bear a metaphorical sense; it might conceivably

<sup>43</sup> Another consideration (see below, p. 64) is also relevant: Libanius probably wrote the *Embassy* with knowledge of Julian's *Caesars*, a literary fiction in which Alexander notably figures.

<sup>44</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 10.10.3; cf. 12.5.2–3; Euseb. *VC* 7–8.

hint at passionate emulation. But a literal meaning and a minimalist interpretation suit the context better: the track Julian follows is the road that runs to Persia, and to military glory.<sup>45</sup> As for **L3**, Libanius plainly deploys the figure of the 'clement' Alexander in much the same terms as he had in his earlier *On behalf of Aristophanes* [=L1]. But now, eight months later, it is deployed in a harsher political context; Libanius is not pleading privately for a disgraced friend, but as a spokesman for his native city: he counsels Julian to imitate a particular action of Alexander's—his clemency to the Athenians—by acting with forbearance towards the Antiochenes. The case of Athens adduced here allows for a kindlier image of Alexander than the case of Thebes adduced in **L1**, but **L3**'s underlying implication is the same: even Alexander, whose temperament was notoriously volatile, and whose propensity to deal harshly with rebellious cities and individuals suspected of disloyalty was common knowledge, had on this occasion spared the Athenians, 'as a great favour to [the orator] Demades'; surely Julian, then, a ruler renowned as a *philanthropos* and a philosopher (*Or.* 15.27), will forbear to penalize the Antiochenes for their recent discourtesies—the more readily, perhaps, thanks to the oratory of his friend Libanius, but principally on the basis of philosophy. The association of Julian with Alexander in **L3** is thus artfully equivocal: like Alexander, he is a 'lord of all' with the power to act as he wishes, and with a cultured regard for oratory; but his 'philanthropic' evenness of temper sets him apart. Julian is both like and unlike Alexander, then—and he is flattered on both counts. To an orator as experienced as Libanius, it came easily to manipulate the 'likeness to Alexander' theme in such ways: twenty years previously, he had elaborated on it equally readily, if less deftly, in an early panegyric that declared the emperors Constans and Constantius more than a match for Alexander.<sup>46</sup>

It remains to consider Libanius' speeches of mourning for Julian, the *Monody* and the *Epitaphios*. Julian's case is compared to Alexander's twice in each of them. They were not, to be clear, speeches composed in the immediate wake of his death (June 363). The *Monody* was written in early 364, the *Epitaphios* in 365:<sup>47</sup> when he wrote them, their author could entertain no hope that anything from Julian's project for a pagan restoration could be salvaged. The four passages at issue (**L5**, **L6**, **L7** and **L8**) can aptly be discussed in two pairs (I here relax the chronological order of discussion a little):

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<sup>45</sup> Wiemer (1995) 187.

<sup>46</sup> *Or.* 59.53–5 (to be dated to 344 rather than 348: see Portmann (1989) 1–18; Wiemer (1994) 512).

<sup>47</sup> See n. 40 above.

**L5** = *Or.* 17.17 (*Monody*)

Libanius recalls Julian's arrival at Antioch in July 362, in preparation for his Persian campaign: 'He came to this city of Antiochus—or if you would have it so, of Alexander, who was dear to him and allowed him no sleep, just as one Athenian general [Miltiades] affected another [Themistocles].'

**L6** = *Or.* 18.260–1 (*Epitaphios*)

A description of events of early June 363, after Julian had withdrawn his forces from Ctesiphon: 'He [Julian] conceived the idea of seeing and passing through Arbela [i.e. Gaugamela], either with or without a battle, so that his victory would be celebrated along with the one that Alexander won there ... He extended his view even to Hyrcania and the rivers of India. But with the expedition now directed to that objective, and with the army already in motion or preparing for it, one of the gods deterred him from it and bade him "think of a return home", as Homer puts it.'

These passages clearly represent Alexander as a revered exemplar whose military achievements Julian wished to rival, and in **L6** a specific plan is indicated—but we must allow for literary inventiveness and exaggeration in both cases. The image of the sleepless emperor in **L5** is studiously derivative; the mention of Athenian generals obliquely signals that it was culled from a story in Plutarch in which the exemplar was Miltiades, the insomniac Themistocles<sup>48</sup>—and there is perhaps a nod to Greek love-poetry too.<sup>49</sup> As for the talk in **L6** of a plan to march east to 'Indian rivers', it echoes and extends an image that had figured in an earlier speech that Libanius had composed soon after Julian's departure from Antioch, *To the Antiochenes: on Julian's Anger* (*Or.* 16).<sup>50</sup> The speech had urged the dispatch of envoys to beg for reconciliation between Julian and the city, and had closed with a flourish (*Or.* 16.56): 'Shall we not send out the news to the very Choaspes that the Antiochenes have made their plea, and receive the message back from there that the king has been reconciled?' The image envisages Julian advancing well beyond Mesopotamia, as far as the river Choaspes—and for any reader of Libanius who knew Herodotus, the mention of that river was richly sug-

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<sup>48</sup> Plut. *Them.* 3.

<sup>49</sup> E.g. Sappho fr. 53 (Bergk); cf. Lib. *Or.* 12.99, quoting (to Julian) the lover's prayer in Sappho (fr. 130 Bergk) 'that the night may grow twice as long'.

<sup>50</sup> For the date of composition (late March/early April 363, shortly before the *Embassy*) and political context, see Wiemer (1995) 201–3; Socr. *HE* 3.17 is clear that the speech was never publicly delivered.

gestive. Susa, the old Achaemenid capital, lay on Choaspes' banks; the Persian kings of old had disdained to drink any water not drawn from its stream; and when Aristagoras had tried to persuade the Spartans to fight the Persians, he had represented 'Susa on the banks of the Choaspes' as the easternmost jewel in their empire, the Great King's prime residence and treasury: 'If you capture it', Aristagoras had told Cleomenes, 'your wealth will assuredly challenge that of Zeus' (Hdt. 1.188; 5.49). The end of Libanius' *On Julian's Anger* envisages Julian doing just that, as conquering all of Persia and lording it at Susa<sup>51</sup>—and implicitly, of course, it evokes the celebrated precedent of Alexander, who had marched uncontested into Susa and acquired the fabulous wealth stored up in the royal treasury there (Plut. *Alex.* 36.1; Arr. *Anab.* 3.16.6).<sup>52</sup> But Alexander had not been content with that, and nor is the Julian posthumously commemorated by Libanius in the *Epitaphios*: **L6** insists that only an unspecified deity's prompting of Julian to 'return home' had deflected him from a firm plan to lead his army eastward 'to Hyrcania and the rivers of India'.<sup>53</sup> That claim plainly credits Julian with an Alexander-like *pothos* for whatever lay beyond his grasp—but it is utterly contradicted by the facts of his army's movements as modern scholarship reconstructs them.<sup>54</sup> **L6**'s assertion that Julian planned to visit the battlefield of Gaugamela is more plausible on that score; after the withdrawal from Ctesiphon, the route the army was due to take as it marched north would have brought it within thirty kilometres of the site.<sup>55</sup> But by the same token, the story loses much of its force as evidence of obsessive emulation: no significant detour would have been entailed.

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<sup>51</sup> Whether Julian in fact ever aimed at total conquest and annexation of Persia is another matter: see below, pp. 100–2.

<sup>52</sup> Neither Plut. *Alex.* nor Arrian mentions the Choaspes in this (or any other) connexion: the oblique nod to Herodotus at Lib. *Or.* 16.56 is the writer's own addition. A possible complication should be noted: Arist. *Meteor.* 1.13, Strabo 15.697 and Curtius 8.10.22 attest a second 'Choaspes', a river in the Hindu-Kush (presumably first so named by Alexander's soldiers in imitation of the Median Choaspes, and best identified with the tributary of the Cophen that Arr. *Anab.* 4.25.7 calls 'Guraeus': see Bosworth, comm. ad loc). In principle, then, the 'Choaspes' of Lib. *Or.* 16.56 might bear a double reference; but Libanius must be thinking chiefly (probably only) of the Choaspes that flowed past Susa; cf. Lib. *Or.* 12.100, a comparable conceit explicitly naming Susa (q.v. below, n. 60).

<sup>53</sup> Arr. *Ind.* 4 lists Indian rivers, and river-crossings are naturally a frequent motif in *Anab.*: 'post-Susa' examples figure at 3.17 (Pasitigris), 3.29 (Oxus), 4.4 (Tanais), 4.22 (Cophen), 5.3 and 5.6 (Indus), 5.13–14 (Hydaspes).

<sup>54</sup> For comment and bibliography on the extent of Julian's aims, see below, pp. 98–100; on his army's movements, N.B. Paschoud (1979) n. 75, on Zos. 3.26.4.

<sup>55</sup> Paschoud, *ibid.*



The last two Libanian passages at issue come from the closing sections of the *Monody* and *Epitaphios* respectively:

**L7** = *Or.* 17.31–2 (*Monody*)

‘He [Julian] who gained the victories lies in his grave, cutting short the fine and noble hopes of the world ...’ Libanius grants that many a king had suffered a violent or premature death; he cites Homeric cases (among them Agamemnon and Achilles), and three historical ones: ‘[There was] Cyrus, but he had sons to succeed him; and Cambyses, but he was mad. Alexander died—but not by an enemy’s hand; and besides, he was a man who might have given grounds for criticism. But he [Julian] who ruled over all from the west to the rising sun, whose soul was filled with virtue, a young man still who had not yet fathered sons—he has been killed by some Achaemenid [i.e. a Persian].’

**L8** = *Or.* 18.297–8 (*Epitaphios*)

Libanius represents the dead Julian as speaking words of comfort to his mourners: “Let it not trouble you that I died in war and by the steel: so did Leonidas and Epaminondas, and Sarpedon and Memnon, sons of the gods. And if the shortness of time allotted me causes you grief, then let Alexander, [son] of Zeus, afford you consolation.” Thus [Julian] might speak, but I would add something: Fate’s decrees are invincible (*ἀνίκητα*) ... It was destined that things must go awry here; so Julian, though he slowed the advance of destiny and brought us happiness while he lived, retired to make way for the onset of a degenerate age.’

These passages are vivid testimony to the readiness of some pagans, in some literary settings, to commemorate Julian as a hero tragically lost to the ‘Greek’ cause.<sup>56</sup> In **L7** Libanius turns the *comparatio* with Alexander distinctly to Julian’s advantage, investing Julian with a Homeric grandeur and acknowledging significant moral flaws in Alexander’s character and conduct (they are not specified, but the standard ‘philosophic’ criticisms are implied); Julian, by contrast, is ‘filled with virtue’. On that score, then, the passage studiously avoids ascribing emulation of Alexander to Julian. So too, Libanius at **L7** is only prepared to draw a qualified parallel between Julian’s and Alexander’s deaths: both die tragically young (Julian all the more so, for being childless); but Julian’s death in battle by an ‘Achaemenid’ spear is more nobly Homeric than Alexander’s, which came ‘not by an enemy’s hand’. The *Monody*’s contrasting of the cases on this point is striking, in the light of Libanius’ insistence in the *Epitaphios*, written less than a year later,

<sup>56</sup> See Smith (1995) 219; Swain (2004) 398–9.

that Julian had *not* been killed by a Persian, but by a Christian traitor within the Roman ranks. The relevant passage in the *Epitaphios* (§§274–5) made no explicit reference to Alexander, but an implied connexion would be obvious to any reader familiar with the tradition that a Macedonian traitor had poisoned Alexander: the passage follows soon after the assertion (§260–1 = **L6**) that Julian had planned to emulate Alexander by leading his army to Gaugamela, and then on to India. **L8**, then, restates **L7**'s contrast between Julian's death in battle and Alexander's bed-ridden end at Babylon, but adds a twist: it implies that Julian had been surreptitiously murdered by a Christian.

The underlying point of likeness at issue in **L8** is the emperor's tragically early death. The passage affirms it with a rhetorical flourish and an artful detail of nomenclature: it puts the comparison into the mouth of the dead Julian, and it makes him liken himself to 'Alexander, [son] of Zeus'. This detail heralds nothing less than Julian's apotheosis, about which the close of the *Epitaphios* is utterly emphatic: he has risen to the gods and lives with them as their companion [*πάρεδρος*], and he can be rightly prayed to for help against the Persians who are once again threatening the Empire.<sup>57</sup> **L8**, that is to say, transposes Julian's 'likeness to Alexander' into a dimension that renders him immune to human judgements, and subject only to 'Fate's invincible decrees': it likens Julian to Alexander not merely as a soldier-king who died too soon, but as a demigod. Libanius was not the only pagan author to assert in the wake of Julian's death that he had joined the gods: a memorable oracle to that effect was soon circulating in Neoplatonist circles.<sup>58</sup> But so far as we know, he was the only one to conjoin the assertion with a parallel assimilating Julian to 'Alexander, son of Zeus'.

The literary dexterity with which Libanius applied the 'likeness to Alexander' theme to Julian's case is patent. But what historical significance attaches to his testimony in the round as evidence of actual *imitatio* or *aemulatio*

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<sup>57</sup> *Or.* 18.304–8 with Smith (1995) 283 n. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Eunapius, *Frag.* 28.6 (Blockley) preserves an oracle of Helios ostensibly addressed to the living Julian: 'But having driven the Persian race headlong with your sceptre / back to Seleucia conquered by your sword, / a fiery chariot whirled amidst storm-clouds / shall take you to Olympus freed from your body / and the much-endured misery of man. / Then you shall come to your father's [King Helios'] hall/ of heavenly light, from which you wandered / into the human frame of mortality'. Bidez (1930) 329 identified this oracle with one to which Ammianus (25.3.19) makes Julian refer on his deathbed. In Smith (1995) 258 n. 127 I hedged on the point; I am now inclined to agree with Fontaine (1987) 223 (= Budé *Amm. comm.* vol. IV *ad loc.* [n. 554]) that two separate oracles are probably at issue. In any event, the 'Helios oracle' transmitted in Eunapius is better dated after Julian's death: in my view, it was probably elicited, or composed, by a member of the philosophic coterie that accompanied Julian to Persia.

*Alexandri?* We should highlight, first, a significant silence. Of Libanius' 'Julianic Orations', only two were speeches commissioned by Julian himself for public delivery or general publication: the panegyric that marked Julian's arrival at Antioch in July 362 (*Or.* 13), and the so-called *Consular Oration*, or *Hypatikos* (*Or.* 12)—the panegyric composed for delivery at the ceremony inaugurating Julian's entry into his fourth consulship on New Year's Day 363. Neither of these speeches has figured in our discussion so far, for a simple reason: neither contains a single mention of Alexander. That would seem a strange omission, if Julian was especially concerned at the time in question to be represented in his publicity as akin to Alexander—and particularly so, in the case of the *Consular Oration*. By the time Libanius composed it, in December 362, it was common knowledge that Julian was planning a Persian expedition,<sup>59</sup> and the preparations for it were well advanced. The *Consular Oration* reflects this context: wars with Persia, ancient and recent, and the assured success of the coming campaign, run through it as a leitmotif—but all without any explicit reference to Alexander.<sup>60</sup> Why not? On one recent view, the omission suggests that Libanius was privately inclined to concur with those who judged the plan for a grand military invasion of Persia unwisely risky, and would have much preferred Julian to take up Shapur's offer of a settlement by diplomatic negotiations.<sup>61</sup> That is surely not a persuasive explanation: the *Consular Oration* commends the notion that Persia must be punished in like coin for earlier attacks on Roman territory, and evinces optimism about the coming war.<sup>62</sup> But given the time and setting of the speech, its omission of any specific reference to Alexander is certainly remarkable—and it cannot have been other than deliberate: barely

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<sup>59</sup> See Lib. *Or.* 18.163–4.

<sup>60</sup> The *Consular Oration* alludes to past Persian wars, and the incipient campaign, at §§37, 40, 48, 52, 58, 62, 66, 70, 73–4, 76, 79, 85 and 88, never mentioning or alluding to Alexander. In a single passing detail (a prospective feast 'at Susa': §100), an oblique evocation of the Alexandrian feast at Susa reported in Plut. *Alex.* 70.3 and Arr. *Anab.* 7.4.4 (cf. 7.11.8, at Opis) might be plausibly conjectured. But if Libanius intended to make that allusion, it would seem markedly awkward on one score. The guiding purpose of the Alexandrian feast, as Plutarch and Arrian saw it, was to celebrate and cement amity and intermarriage between the Macedonian and Persian nobilities, with Greeks and Persians invited as fellow-guests on equal terms. Such a vision is utterly incongruous with the anti-Persian triumphalism that pervades Libanius' speech as a whole, and with the particular passage at issue; Libanius prays at §100 'that our army may feast at Susa, with Persians serving as wine-waiters'.

<sup>61</sup> Scholl (1994) 134–6.

<sup>62</sup> Scholl (1994) privileges *Or.* 12.77 as proof of Libanius' wish for negotiations; but see Seager (1997) 265 n. 32, citing *Or.* 12.74 in objection; we may add also §§78–9 and 100. For vengeance and optimism as keynotes in the *Consular Oration*, see Wiemer (1995) 178–9.

two months previously, after all, Libanius *had* adduced the Julian–Alexander parallel in *On behalf of Aristophanes* (= **L1**). Why not, then, in the *Consular Oration*?

The context and tenor of that earlier parallel offer us a clue. Unlike the panegyric, Libanius' plea *On behalf of Aristophanes* was written on his own initiative, not to Julian's commission, and was never intended for public delivery; moreover, we noticed earlier (p. 16) that the particular parallel drawn in it implicitly acknowledged an un-philosophic propensity to anger and harshness in Alexander's case: granted, he had spared Pindar's descendants at Thebes—but the general population, women and children included, had been sold into slavery (Arr. *Anab.* 1.9.9). The un-philosophic blemish may have weighed more heavily in Libanius' mind when he was writing the *Consular Oration*, a commissioned panegyric to be delivered at Julian's public investiture as consul. Libanius perhaps judged it out of place to commend Alexander as an all-round imperial exemplar in that setting, at least in the case of Julian; his aspiration to rule 'on the basis of philosophy' was being publicly praised in civic decrees and dedications at the time,<sup>63</sup> and Libanius takes pains in the *Consular Oration* to commend him for it.<sup>64</sup>

Conceivably, Libanius' disinclination to mention Alexander in the *Consular Oration* also owed something to an open letter composed not long previously by Julian himself, the *Against Nilus*; at one point in it, Julian sharply criticizes Alexander's merciless treatment of his *hetairoi*. The letter has conventionally been dated loosely towards the end of 362, but a recent study allows more precision: it was probably already published, and known to Libanius, by September/October 362 at latest, well before he composed the *Consular Oration*.<sup>65</sup> But whatever the particular reason for his decision, Libanius' omitting to mention Alexander in the *Consular Oration* he delivered on 1 January 363 tells us one thing for certain (a point that earlier scholarship on Julian's *imitatio Alexandri* has not registered): Libanius cannot have received any hint of encouragement from Julian himself, or from his con-

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<sup>63</sup> *ILS* 751: [*Julian*]*o domino totius orbis, philosophi[ae] magistro ...* (Pergamum); *ibid.*, n. 2: τὸν ἐκ φιλοσοφίας βασιλεύοντα ... Ἰουλιανόν (Iasus).

<sup>64</sup> *Lib. Or.* 12.29, 33, 54, 92–5.

<sup>65</sup> *In Nilum* = *Ep.* 50 (82 Bidez) criticizes Alexander at 446a: see below, pp. 94–6. For the conventional dating, see Bidez (1924) 94 ('la fin de l'année 362'); but see now Wiemer (1996) 192–7, favouring composition by May/June 362, and Libanian knowledge of *In Nilum* by Sept/Oct 362 at latest (*ibid.*, 193, with *Lib. Ep.* 758 Förster (95 Norman) §§5–6; cf. *Lib. Or.* 18.198).

tacts with court-intimates such as Priscus, to play upon the ‘likeness to Alexander’ theme in this speech; if he had, he would certainly have done so.<sup>66</sup>

It is only in the *Embassy*, composed about six months later, in May or early June 363, that Libanius first plays on the theme with any emphasis. The *Embassy* was intended to flatter Julian, but it was not propaganda elicited by him, and at the time of writing Libanius had had no contact with him for a good two months (Julian had set out for Persia on 5 March, and wrote his last letter to Libanius five days later).<sup>67</sup> The emergence of the theme in the *Embassy*, then, was not dictated from on high: it reflects the author’s own purposes, choices and preoccupations—and the heady mood abroad in the first weeks and months after the expedition set out. It was in just such contexts that writers in the past had been most prone to emphasize a ruler’s ‘likeness to Alexander’, and the news filtering back to Antioch reported a sequence of successful engagements, crossings of great rivers and captures of fortresses, and (by May) an advance deep into Assyria.<sup>68</sup> There seemed grounds for hope that the Sassanian empire would soon be broken as decisively as the old Achaemenid empire had been by Alexander. Moreover, by the time Libanius wrote the *Embassy* he had surely read the satirical fiction *Caesars* that Julian had composed in mid-December 362—and the portrayal of Alexander in that work as an honorary Roman emperor feasting on Olympus, and in the gods’ judgement a conqueror of nations so outstanding that only the emperor Trajan could be ranked his equal as a soldier, was obviously suggestive.<sup>69</sup> *Caesars* by no means omits reference to Alexander’s faults, but its emphasis on his military excellence played to his greatest strength as a potential exemplar. The literary possibilities offered by Julian’s treatment of Alexander in *Caesars* will not have escaped Libanius’ notice: when news of the campaign’s early successes in Mesopotamia reached Antioch, it will have encouraged him to pick up on Julian’s associa-

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<sup>66</sup> On Libanius’ contacts with Julian and his court at Antioch, the commissioning of the *Consular Oration*, and the circumstances of its public delivery in Julian’s presence, see *Lib. Or.* 1.123, 126–32, with Wiemer (1995) 44–7, 145–7, 160–2, 360–3.

<sup>67</sup> *Ep.* 58 (98 Bidez): the letter describes Julian’s impressions of places and persons encountered on his march, and his arrangements for the supply and transportation of his troops; it says nothing of Alexander. Nor does Libanius’ last letter to Julian, on which see Wiemer (1995) 51.

<sup>68</sup> Wiemer (1995) 225–6; for summary chronology of the expedition’s progress, see Dodgeon and Lieu (1991) 231–5; for the heady mood among Julians’ admirers, see below, n. 114, on *ILS* 454.

<sup>69</sup> I discuss the treatment of Alexander in *Caesars* below, pp. 96–8. The composition-date of *Caesars* (361 or 362) has been long debated; in my view, composition at Antioch late in 362 is almost certain; it is surely one of the ‘fine compositions’ that Libanius (*Or.* 18.178) credits Julian with writing there that winter.

tion of Alexander with Trajan, and to extend the theme to embrace Julian himself.

There was also, we have seen, a pressing local issue in Libanius' mind when he wrote the *Embassy*. The unwelcome side to the news from Mesopotamia was that Julian still nurtured his grudge against the people of Antioch: on his return, he would be shunning the city he had once so conspicuously favoured; Tarsus, rather, would enjoy the fruits of his 'philanthropy'.<sup>70</sup> Libanius hoped for a reconciliation. In hailing Julian in the *Embassy* as an all-conquering general who 'ran the same courses' as Alexander, he took care to recall the (fictional) local tradition that Antioch was 'Alexander's city' (**L4**);<sup>71</sup> and he shrewdly added a further term of comparison—*μεγαλοψυχία*—by alluding to the celebrated story of Alexander's forbearance towards the Athenians in the face of their abuse and insults (**L3**). The story was well picked to speak to Julian, but neither it nor the *Embassy*'s image of Julian and Alexander as travellers 'on the same road' constitutes persuasive evidence that the 'likeness to Alexander' theme had been accorded any especially suggestive emphasis in Julian's official publicity. Nor, of course, do the passages ascribing emulation to him in the later speeches of mourning (**L5**, **L6**). The Julian who strives to emulate Alexander in the *Epitaphios* and the *Monody* is an idealized figure shaped to appeal to a particular and limited readership; neither of the speeches at issue was ever actually delivered in a public context, or intended for open publication. They mourned Julian as a lost paragon of pagan imperial virtue—and for Libanius, importantly, a distinctively Greek paragon, 'firmly incorporated within Greek myth and thought'.<sup>72</sup> That emphasis was apt in its way, inasmuch as Julian's own cultural horizon had been self-consciously Greek; he had defined himself publicly at Antioch as 'Greek by culture', and had called his political and religious programme a defence of 'Hellenism'.<sup>73</sup> On these counts, Libanius was prompted to cast him as an Alexander-like hero. (**L7**, **L8**). But by the same token, Julian was fitting company, the *Epitaphios* insists, for many another cultural hero of the Greeks: Socrates and Plato, Themistocles and Pericles, Leonidas and Brasidas—all figure as *comparanda* in the speech.<sup>74</sup> Most of these are familiar *exempla* in ancient historiography, of course—and

<sup>70</sup> Lib. *Or.* 16.53–4; cf. *Or.* 15.52, 55, 77, reiterating what Julian had announced on quitting Antioch (Lib. *Or.* 1.132; Amm. Marc. 23.2.5); for his earlier favours, *Misopog.* 367d, 370cd.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Lib. *Or.* 11.72–7 (local tradition); the true founder was Seleucus I, as Julian pointedly notes at *Misopog.* 347a.

<sup>72</sup> Swain (2004) 396–400.

<sup>73</sup> *Misopog.* 367c; *Ep.* 22 (84a Bidez) 429c; cf. *Ep.* 35 (78 Bidez) 375c; *C. Gal.* 43a.

<sup>74</sup> *Or.* 18.272, 276, 281, 297, 306.

in some of its narrative sections, the *Epitaphios* may approximate to the sort of descriptions a historiographer might produce. But a text that pictures a dead emperor as a god to whom one can aptly pray (§304) is not a history: however ardent an admirer of Alexander the historical Julian may have been, he was assuredly not the figure that Libanius retrospectively constructed in the *Epitaphios*.

### III.ii. Ammianus Marcellinus

Of the historiographers who drew the Julian–Alexander comparison, Ammianus takes pride of place. Unlike Libanius, he made no claim to friendship or personal acquaintance with Julian, and his account of the reign was published nearly thirty years after Julian’s death.<sup>75</sup> But he wrote as a retired officer who had twice served in armies under his command—first during Julian’s first campaigning season as Caesar in Gaul in 356, then in Persia. Whether or not his unit marched out from Antioch with Julian on 5 March 363 (it could have joined the main force further east), his account of the Persian campaign undoubtedly rests partly on autopsy. Until recently no one doubted, either, that he was a native of Antioch, and acquainted with Libanius. Both points are now controversial,<sup>76</sup> but we can leave these questions open; for our purposes, the essential point to observe—and it may be regarded as certain—is that Ammianus, when he wrote his account of Julian, had read Libanius’ *Epitaphios*.<sup>77</sup> He had also studied and savoured some of Julian’s own compositions—and one of them was *Caesars*.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> It is safe to assume composition of the books of the *Res Gestae* treating Julian in the 380s, and publication of them (and most likely the whole work) at Rome ca. 390/391: see Fontaine (1987) I.10, Matthews (1989) 22–7. On one view, the last six books of the work (26–31) were published a few years later in the 390s: for a review, see Sabbah (1999) xxxii–xlili.

<sup>76</sup> Both points are entailed by Lib. *Ep.* 1063, written in 392, provided that the letter’s addressee—an Antiochene ‘Marcellinus’ currently living at Rome, and the author of a *συγγραφή*—is identified with Ammianus Marcellinus. The identification was disputed by Fornara, (1992) 328–44, but reasserted (in my view, probably rightly) by Matthews (1994) 252–69. Barnes (1998) 56–8 concurs with Fornara, but accepts that the case for Antiochene origin does not rest solely on the evidence of the letter. See now Kelly (2008) 111–16.

<sup>77</sup> See Sabbah (1978) 243–92 on ‘l’empreinte de Libanius’, esp. in connexion with Amm. 25.3.15–4.27 (the deathbed speech and *elogium* of Julian); Kelly (2008) 296–7.

<sup>78</sup> Amm. 16.5.4 (= **A1** below) commends Julian’s literary elegance; see 20.18.8; 21.10.7 and 22.14.2 for his refs. to particular writings. *Caesars* is not among those explicitly noted, but Kelly (2008) 213–14 has astutely identified an allusion at 23.5.17 to *Caes.* 313b.

Alexander is mentioned in connexion with Julian four times by Ammianus. As with Libanius, we shall itemize and comment on the passages individually, then review the testimony in the round. (Translations follow the Budé edition's text.)

**A1** (= Amm. 16.5.4–8)

A description of Julian's night-time routine while campaigning in Gaul in 356–7: 'It became habitual with him to divide the night into three periods of duty, one for sleep, one for affairs of state, and one for the Muses; Alexander the Great, we read, had also done this, but Julian was far more resolute. For Alexander used to put a bronze bowl beside his bed and hold a silver ball in his hand, with his arm extended outside the bed, so that the sound of the ball falling into the bowl would wake him up as sleep overtook him and relaxed his muscles. But Julian, without any material instrument, woke up whenever he pleased. He always got up half way through the night, and not from a downy couch or silk coverlet, but from a rug and rough blanket ... and in these austere conditions he attended diligently to his public duties. After dealing with whatever he thought difficult and essential, he would turn his attention to the sustenance of his intellect, and the eagerness with which he pursued the sublime knowledge of first principles was incredible: he would run through all the branches of philosophy in his learned discussions, as if seeking to feed a soul soaring to loftier levels ... But nor did he neglect less rarified subjects: he also attended in a measured degree to poetry and rhetoric (as is clear from the pure and dignified style of his treatises and letters) and to the complexities of our history, domestic and foreign ... Such were the nightly proofs of his pure-heartedness and virtues.'

**A1** is a *comparatio* of the sort that rhetors habitually practised in their declamations. It postulates neither *imitatio* nor *aemulatio*, but rather a natural affinity: it likens Julian to Alexander explicitly for his ascetic self-discipline and superabundant energy (with a detail that gives Julian the edge)—and perhaps implicitly, for his enthusiasm for philosophy and literature (again, in terms that would favour Julian, as a man of deeper learning).<sup>79</sup> The anecdote of the ball-and-bowl contraption was a topos—Diogenes Laertius (5.16) had told it of Aristotle—and the whole passage is self-avowedly rhetorical: it occurs in the praises of Julian's virtues that preface Ammianus' account of his early Rhineland campaigns of 356–7—an account which Ammianus declares at the outset must appear, despite its faithfulness to fact, 'almost the

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<sup>79</sup> On Alexander's love of philosophy and literature, Plut *Alex.* 7–8; on his asceticism and denying himself sleep, Arr. *Anab.* 7.9.9.



stuff of panegyric'.<sup>80</sup> Alexander is only a late addition to several exemplary names adduced more directly in these introductory praises (16.1.4): Julian has already been declared 'a second Titus' for his political wisdom, 'most like' Trajan for his glorious wars, a match for Antoninus in his clemency, and the equal of Marcus Aurelius in his passion for philosophy (and for what it is worth, Ammianus here says something of Marcus that he nowhere says of Alexander: it was Marcus 'in emulation of whom [Julian] moulded his own actions and character').<sup>81</sup>

The three other passages at issue are shorter and can conveniently be listed together for discussion.

**A2** (= Amm. 21.8.3)

A description of Julian's advance along the Danube on his march in late 361 against Constantius II: 'He feared that the small size of his forces might render him contemptible to the local populace and prompt it to oppose him. To prevent this, he devised a clever plan ...' [He divided his army into three divisions; one continued along the Danube, while the other two were sent out in different directions], 'in order that, being dispersed over various parts of the country, they might give the impression of a huge force and fill everywhere with alarm. This, to be sure [*enim*], was what Alexander and many skilful generals afterwards had done, when the occasion demanded it.'

**A3** (= Amm. 24.4.26–7)

A report of the division of the spoils after the capture of the fortress of Maiozamalcha (mid-May 363) in the course of the Persian expedition: 'The booty was divided according to the estimate of merit and hard service ... But as for the lovely young girls taken captive (and the women of Persia are renowned for their beauty), Julian forbore to touch or even look at a single one of them, acting in the likeness of Alexander and Scipio Africanus [*Alexandrum imitatus et Africanum*], who had avoided such conduct, lest they should succumb to desire after having shown themselves unconquered [*invictos*] by hardship.'

**A4** (= Amm. 25.4.15)

From Ammianus' closing *elogium* on Julian: 'There are many manifest proofs of his generosity [*liberalitas*] ..., [among them] the fact that he never had a desire to increase his wealth, which he thought was better secured in the hands of its present owners—a view he would express by

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<sup>80</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.1.1: *ad laudativam paene materiem pertinebit*.

<sup>81</sup> For discussion of this notion, Hunt (1995) 287–98; and see below, pp. 88–9.

remarking occasionally [*aliquotiens*] that Alexander the Great, when asked where his treasures were, gave the kindly answer: "In [the hands of] my friends".<sup>7</sup>

These passages, too, offer slim pickings, if one is seeking evidence of an effort on Julian's part to evoke the precedent of Alexander in public style or action, or an impulse to rival or surpass his fame or achievements. In **A2**, the comparison is drawn not just with Alexander, but 'many other skilful generals', and again without any suggestion of conscious *imitatio*: the 'similarity' is represented as an observation by the author, not a precedent in Julian's own mind. **A3** is more ambiguous on this score: Julian's self-denying reaction to the captured Persian beauties clearly evokes the famous story of Alexander's chivalrous treatment of Darius' wife and daughters after Issus, and the Latin *imitatus* could certainly connote conscious copying;<sup>82</sup> but if so, the passage in this case would need to connote copying of Scipio Africanus as much as of Alexander.<sup>83</sup> On balance, *imitatus* is probably better construed here to mean simply that Julian, as Ammianus saw it, had acted 'in like manner' to these two: Alexander and Scipio Africanus served as stock *exempla* of resistance to sexual temptation, and had been paired (and indeed compared) in this connexion by earlier writers whom Ammianus is known to have read.<sup>84</sup>

We are left with **A4**, the report that Julian 'occasionally' (*aliquotiens*) used to quote a saying attributed to Alexander commending generosity in a king: his treasury lay 'in [the hands of his] friends' (*apud amicos*). Julian will certainly have known and quite likely had quoted that saying: it was a proverbial commonplace.<sup>85</sup> That said, the particular context to Ammianus' report deserves a word: it occurs in the lengthy *elogium* (or 'necrology') of Julian (25.4.1–27), in which Ammianus returns to and develops the panegyric

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<sup>82</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 21; Arr. *Anab.* 2.12, 4.20; cf. Diocletian's possible *imitatio* in his treatment of Narses' wife, noted above at p. 50. But we should note that the Persian beauties offered to Julian were not royal women: Ammianus' story aims chiefly to stress his asceticism, not his chivalry, and its detail that Julian was unwilling even to lay eyes on the women clearly echoes Plut. *Alex.* 22.5 (on whose nuanced imagery of Alexander's *sophrosyné*, see Stadter (1995) 228–9).

<sup>83</sup> cf. Pol. 10.19.3; Livy 26.50. Scipio himself has been credited with *imitatio Alexandri*: for recent views, see Spencer (2002), 168 (agnostic); Tisé (2002) ch. 2 *passim* (sceptical).

<sup>84</sup> See e.g. Front. 2.11.5; Aulus Gellius 7.8.3. Ammianus' allusion to Scipio may have drawn on the latter, or else directly on the story at Pol. 10.19.3.

<sup>85</sup> Theon (2nd c. AD), *Chria* 1, ap. Stobaeus 214, cites the Greek version; cf. Them. *Or.* 16.203c (AD 383), citing it in praise of Theodosius; and implicitly Arr. *Anab.* 7.9.9 (the speech at Opis). Julian surely echoes the proverb in praising Alexander's generosity to friends at *Or.* 1.43c; and also at *Caes.* 313ab, noting Alexander Severus' lack of generosity.

themes noted in connexion with **A1**. The *elogium* offers Ammianus' closing verdict on Julian's reign under eight conventional headings: his possession of the philosophic virtues of moderation, wisdom, justice and courage; then his martial expertise, his authority, his success, and finally his generosity. Within this schema, Ammianus might easily have cited the Alexander-parallel in the sections devoted to courage, martial expertise and authority, and perhaps also under the heading *moderatio* (reprising the abstinence and self-denial commended in **A1** and **A3**). But that is not what Ammianus does: the parallel only occurs—and only very obliquely, by citation of a proverb—as a coda to the proofs of Julian's regal 'generosity'; conspicuously, there is no attempt in the *elogium* to emphasise Julian's likeness to Alexander as a soldier of phenomenal energy and courage.

In the *elogium* of Julian, then, Ammianus' recourse to the 'likeness to Alexander' theme is surprisingly restrained—and recent scholarship has argued that the point holds also for his deployment of the theme in his narrative of Julian's reign in general.<sup>86</sup> Certainly, none of the four passages we have itemized does anything to establish that Alexander had had an especially privileged place in Julian's heart or publicity; and given the generous length of Ammianus' account of Julian's career, and the centrality of the Persian campaign within his account, four citations of Alexander's name seems a modest total: the parallel could have been adduced far more often, if Ammianus had so wished. His reticence in his narrative of the Persian campaign (23.2–5; 24.1–25.3) seems especially telling. Ammianus ascribes acts of personal bravery to Julian at the sieges of Pirisabora and Maiozamalcha that cried out to be compared with celebrated stories told of Alexander;<sup>87</sup> and his description (24.1.3) of a military trick devised by Julian at Anatha to give an exaggerated impression of his army's size could easily have prompted a reprise of the Julian–Alexander parallel that Ammianus had drawn earlier, in connexion with Julian's Danubian advance of 361 (21.8.3 = **A2**). But the brute fact is that the allusion to Alexander's courtesy towards Darius' women (24.4.27 = **A3**) is the only point in Ammianus' narrative of the Persian campaign at which the Julian–Alexander parallel is drawn.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Szidat (1988) 1023–36; Lane Fox (1997) 250.

<sup>87</sup> Amm. 24.4.14; 24.4.24 (with 24.5.11, set near Ctesiphon); cf., e.g., Plut., *Alex.* 24.10–12 (rescue of Phoenix), 63.2–5 (besieging the Mallians).

<sup>88</sup> Strictly speaking, 24.4.27 (= **A3**) it is the only point at which Alexander's name arises in *any* connexion in the narrative of the campaign: it occurs otherwise only in the long excursus on Persia (23.6.1–6.86) that punctuates the narrative at the point of the expedition's entry into 'Assyria', in passing references to his exploits and death in Persia: Amm. Marc. 23.6.1–2 (Alex.'s death in Babylon); *ibid.* 8 (his alleged death-bed testament); *ibid.* 22 (his victory at Gaugamela); see Fontaine (1987) I.62, n. 1. These mentions may

Unlike Libanius, who had credited Julian with a plan to lead his army to Gaugamela and continue fighting his way east as far as the Indus in emulation of Alexander [L6], Ammianus nowhere explicitly compares his military objectives in invading Persia with those of Alexander.

Alexander is absent, too, in Ammianus' narrative of what in retrospect was patently the greatest military success in Julian's entire career: his victory over the Alamanni at Strasbourg in 357. Ammianus reckoned this an achievement that deserved a panegyric (16.1.3), and he recounted the battle at greater length than any other in his history (16.12.1–70)—but without evoking the 'likeness to Alexander' theme. The omission in this case has a particular interest, given the likelihood that the *History* of Eunapius was one of the sources that Ammianus consulted when he wrote his account of the battle.<sup>89</sup> Only fragments of Eunapius' work survive, but Zosimus' account of Julian is reported by Photius to have simply summarized that of Eunapius, and the one point at which the Julian–Alexander parallel occurs in Zosimus is precisely in his report of the Battle of Strasbourg: it was a victory no less great, he says, than 'the battle of Alexander against Darius'.<sup>90</sup> If this detail derives from Eunapius' history (which is probable), and if Ammianus consulted that history (which is possible), it would follow that Ammianus knew an account of Julian's victory at Strasbourg in which the 'likeness to Alexander' theme was adduced, but chose nonetheless not to adduce it in his own account of the battle.

Compared to the terms in which Libanius drew the Julian–Alexander parallel in the *Monody* and *Epitaphios*, Ammianus' recourse to it seems distinctly muted. Various reasons for this could be offered. Notwithstanding his remark at 16.1.3, Ammianus was writing narrative history, not posthumous panegyric; and he was writing it at Rome for a Latin-reading public—and from the viewpoint of a former soldier. Libanius, by contrast, typified the civilian ethos, and his own cultural horizons (and likewise those of his students and anticipated readership) were emphatically Greek.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps the later date of composition is relevant, too: Ammianus was writing a good twenty years after Libanius composed his *Epitaphios*: on one view, he may

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obliquely imply the Alexander-parallel's tragic aptness in Julian's case; but they do not explicitly draw it.

<sup>89</sup> The hypothesis that the first edition of Eunapius was published in time to serve as a source for Ammianus was disputed by Paschoud (e.g. Paschoud [1979] xviii, and also at Paschoud [1980]), but is still commended by, e.g. Matthews (1989) 172, 504, n. 75 and by Barnes (1998) 173. Ammianus had perhaps also read a (now lost) account of the battle composed by Julian himself, attested by Eunapius F 17 (Blockley) and Lib. *Ep.* 38 Norman = 35 Forster (see above, n. 37).

<sup>90</sup> Zos. 3.3.3: referring either to Issus or Gaugamela.

<sup>91</sup> Liebeschuetz (1972) 10f., 114–5; Swain (2004) 396–9.

have been reacting against a comparison which he judged had been made too much of by others who had written on Julian since his death.<sup>92</sup> That is quite likely true—but it need not entail that Ammianus saw no substantial likeness in the cases. There are points in his narrative at which Ammianus does not cite Alexander's name, but nonetheless ascribes moods and motives to Julian in language that obliquely evokes characteristics traditionally associated with Alexander. Shortly before the expedition falters at Ctesiphon, we find Ammianus' Julian 'hoping for so much from a fortune which had never yet failed him that he frequently dared many enterprises bordering on rashness' (24.6.4); at Ctesiphon itself, his 'keen and constant longing for that which lay beyond his grasp [*avida semper ad ulteriora cupiditas*]' prompts him to rebuke his cautious generals as laggards whose love of ease would deprive him of 'Persian realms already all but won' (24.7.3). There are inescapable echoes in these phrases of the Alexander of the ancient literary tradition: his yearning for unending glory and conquest—his *πόθος*—was a commonplace; his critics liked to argue that his military success had owed more to his luck than to his intrinsic virtues; and even his admirers acknowledged a reckless streak in his generalship.<sup>93</sup> So too, as the day of his death approaches, Ammianus' Julian succumbs to nightmares and portents. He dreams that the Genius of Rome has deserted him, and is stupefied by the sight of a blazing star (25.2.3–4): there is surely an echo here of Plutarch's Alexander in his last days, who '[became] convinced that he had lost the gods' favour' and fell prey to superstition, 'interpret[ing] every strange or unusual occurrence, even the most trivial, as a portent'.<sup>94</sup> And some of these tacit evocations surely recur subliminally in the strained defence of Julian's expedition that Ammianus offers at the very close of the *elogium* (25.4.25–6): exculpating him from the charge that he had rashly kindled a Persian war, Ammianus declares that his 'miraculous speed and energy' (*mira dictu celeritate ... pari studio*) would indeed have successfully 'set the East to rights again' (*orientem ... recrearet*), if only 'the decrees of Heaven' had accorded with his plans. 'Rashness' here is consigned to the sidelines, as if it were irrelevant to the practical outcome, merely the residue of a miraculous energy that would inevitably have triumphed if the divine will had granted Julian a longer period of good fortune: *sotto voce*, Ammianus evokes the ghost of a luckier king

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<sup>92</sup> Lane Fox (1997) 250, with implicit reference to Christian writers, among them Gregory Nazianzen (on whom see below, pp. 74–6); but pagan authors such as Libanius or Eunapius might be relevant too.

<sup>93</sup> On Alexander's *pothos*, see (still) Ehrenberg (1938) 52–61, with e.g. Arr. *Anab.* 5.25–6; 7.19, Plut. *Alex.* 62.5; on 'luck', Plut. *De Alex. Magni fortuna aut virtute* 1.1–4 (rebutting the critics); on his strategic recklessness: cf. Tac. *Ann.* 2.73.

<sup>94</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 74.1, 75.1; cf. Arr. *Anab.* 7.24.

endowed with miraculous energy—but he does so very delicately, because to have actually named Alexander here could only have served to underline the collapse of the Julian–Alexander parallel in a basic and crucial connexion. Ammianus' reticence in drawing the parallel in the *elogium*, that is to say, is bound up with the basic problem that he faced in narrating Julian's reign. Ammianus intended his account of Julian to be the centre-piece of his history; he was 'assuredly a man of heroic standing' (25.4.1). But the ultimate test of an emperor's worth for readers of imperial historiography was military success against Rome's enemies, and Julian's Persian campaign had failed disastrously. It is not hard, then, to guess why Ammianus adduced the 'likeness to Alexander' theme so sparsely and circumspectly in his narrative of Julian's reign. To have emphasized it would have risked highlighting an aspect to the 'likeness' that Ammianus strongly sensed, but strongly wished to gloss over: as a commander, Julian had acted recklessly on occasions; so had Alexander, too—but in Julian's case, the recklessness had not ultimately been redeemed by military success.<sup>95</sup>

### III.iii: The Christian Testimonies: Gregory Nazianzen, Philostorgius and Socrates Scholasticus

Inasmuch as the purpose of the Alexander-comparison was usually to commend and glamorize an emperor, one might expect Christian accounts of Julian to eschew it. But some Christian writers vehemently hostile to Julian's memory do adduce it, slanting it to their own purposes; and on one view their testimonies offer telling indications, refracted through a hostile lens, of an obsessive interest in Alexander on Julian's part.

We should emphasize at the outset that the Christian testimonies to Julian's 'likeness to Alexander' are extremely exiguous. There is a single, very oblique, allusion in an text written soon after Julian's death by Gregory Nazianzen, then silence until well into the fifth century, when the theme surfaces in two ecclesiastical historians (twice in Philostorgius, once in Socrates Scholasticus); the other principal Church historians of the age—Rufinus, Sozomen and Theodoret—do not touch on it. The silence of the late fourth century Christian writers is especially noteworthy, given the range of potentially relevant texts: the theme never figures in the works of Basil or Athanasius or Augustine or Jerome, although they all refer to Julian; nor in John Chrysostom's *On Babylas, against Julian*; nor in Ephraem's hymns against Julian. On the face of it, then, most Christian writers of the period were ei-

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<sup>95</sup> On Ammianus' underlying sense of Julian's *temeritas* (rashness) in the military field, see Seager, (1986) 73–5; on his exculpatory placing of Julian outside the frame of human judgement, Smith (1999) 89–104.

ther indifferent to the theme, or deliberately shunned it; on that score, at least, the testimonies to which we now turn are atypical.

Gregory Nazianzen had observed and had maybe casually encountered the young Julian in lecture-halls as a fellow-student at Athens in summer 355 (Greg. *Or.* 5.23), but he never had any personal contact with him beyond that, then or afterwards. His testimony comes in his *Against Julian II* (*Or.* 5), one of a linked pair of invectives written less than a year after Julian's death (perhaps even before Libanius wrote his *Monody*).<sup>96</sup> The passage in question purports to recount an event that occurred in the wake of the skirmish in which Julian was fatally wounded; it is offered as 'a most evident demonstration of his insanity [*κακοδαιμονία*]':

**GN** (= Greg. Naz., *Or.* 5.14 = *PG* 35.681a–b)

'As he lay on the bank of the river [Tigris], sorely afflicted by his wound, he recalled how those who had sought glory [*δόξα*] in previous times had contrived somehow to disappear from human sight and had thus come to be reckoned gods. He was filled with desire for the same glory, and with shame at the manner of his death, whose rashness [*ἀβουλία*] would bring infamy. What, then, did he contrive to do? [...] He tried to hurl himself into the river, with the help of some of his intimates—accomplices and fellow-initiates in [his] secret rites [*μυσταῖς τῶν ἀπορρήτων*]. Were it not that one of the court-eunuchs saw what was happening and told the others [...] and thus prevented the attempt, yet another new 'god' born from an accident would have manifested itself in the minds of fools!'

Although Gregory does not name Alexander here, and although the basic motive he ascribes to Julian is less to copy any single individual than to trick posterity into thinking him a god, his story clearly echoes a tale about Alexander known from a sceptical report in Arrian: the fatally-ill Alexander had supposedly tried to jump into the Euphrates, 'so as to disappear from men's sight and thus leave a stronger belief among later men that he was a child of one of the gods, and had gone to join them'—but was stopped by his wife Roxane.<sup>97</sup> Implicitly, then, Gregory was imputing *imitatio Alexandri* to Julian—but in a fantastically implausible context, and not on any ground that could ever have figured in Julian's own publicity in his lifetime. One de-

<sup>96</sup> Date: Bernardi (1983) 11–37 argues for completion of the pair only in Spring 364 ('après l'avènement de Valentinien et de Valens'); in my view, completion by late 363 is not decisively precluded.

<sup>97</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 7.27; Plutarch had probably reported the story, too, in the (now lost) closing chapters of his *Alexander*: see Pelling (1973) 334.

tail, though—the mention of ‘fellow-initiates’ helping Julian—is intriguing. It surely alludes to Maximus and Priscus and their like, the Neoplatonist–cum–theurgist intimates of Julian who had accompanied him on the Persian expedition; and we know that after Julian’s death it was claimed in some pagan Neoplatonist circles that his soul had ascended to join the gods.<sup>98</sup> The same notion, we have seen, coloured the close of Libanius’ *Epitaphios*; whereas Gregory’s dying Julian attempts to become a god by trickery, in Libanius his virtues actually transform him into a divine *πάρεδρος*. Both claims are clearly fantasies—but both were made within a year or so of Julian’s death, and were presumably picking up on *something* in the atmosphere at the time: it is tempting to suspect that both authors were reacting in contrasting ways, Christian and pagan, to rumours of the deceased Julian’s divinity fostered by some of his bereft philosophic intimates. In that case, there could be an interesting twist in the background in Gregory’s case. It was at Athens in 355 that Priscus first taught and became intimate with Julian, and elsewhere in *Against Julian II* (*Or.* 5.23) Gregory claims that Julian’s secret motive in settling as a student at Athens had been to discover his destiny by consulting a clique of ‘sacrificers and impostors’—words which in context must chiefly connote the circle of Priscus and its theurgic rituals of divination. Gregory, also at Athens at the time, had only known Priscus’ school by repute, but he knew, or thought he knew, what Julian’s theurgist friends Priscus and Maximus, secretly got up to, and had given an account of it in *Against Julian I*: acts of sorcery, devised to summon and commune with the souls of *δαίμονες*.<sup>99</sup> At **GN**, then, Gregory arguably meant to imply that the ‘help’ the dying Julian received from these friends involved some sort of divinatory imposture that called up the soul of Alexander. That would only be a fancy on Gregory’s part, to be clear: if anything so dramatic had in fact been claimed by Julian’s theurgic intimates, it would surely have been reported in Eunapius’ *Lives of the Philosophers*. But we shall find a similar notion in a later Christian report of Julian’s ‘likeness to Alexander’ that demonstrably draws on Gregory’s story.<sup>100</sup>

Gregory’s reference to a secret purpose to which Julian’s intimates were privy could prompt a further speculation. His chief debt at **GN** is plainly to the tale of the dying Alexander’s attempt to jump into a river, but he may have had another story about Alexander in mind as well. In the popular tradition, Alexander’s belief in his own divinity was closely bound up with his visit to the oracle of Zeus Ammon at Siwah. According to Plutarch, a se-

<sup>98</sup> See above, p. 61 and n. 58.

<sup>99</sup> Greg. Naz.. *Or.* 4.55 [= *Against Julian I*], on Maximus’ subterranean initiation of Julian.

<sup>100</sup> See below, pp. 79–82.



cret oracle delivered to him there caused him to write to his mother to tell her he had received a prophecy that he could only reveal to her in person—the implication being that he was indeed the son of Zeus (Plut. *Alex.* 27.8). Christian apologists—and later, St. Augustine—liked to cite the story of ‘Alexander’s letter to his mother’ in an euhemeristic version; he had written to her from Egypt, they said, to tell her that its learned priests had disclosed to him the sordid truth about the pagan gods: they were not gods at all, but mere mortals—kings posthumously esteemed gods by superstitious men in bygone times.<sup>101</sup> If Gregory knew this Christian version of the story, the Alexander-parallel he evoked in his account of the dying Julian’s wish to be thought a god acquires additional piquancy. In its Christian version, the story represents Alexander’s celebrated claim to divine parentage and honours as a cynical imposture;<sup>102</sup> likewise, Gregory insists that Julian consciously ‘contrived’ his attempted leap into the Tigris as a means of deceiving superstitious ‘fools’.

None of the modern scholars who claim that Julian strongly identified with Alexander cites Gregory’s story. That is understandable. It is a patent fiction, illuminating not the historical Julian, but the beginnings of the formation of the legendary Julian of early Christian tradition; ‘pour lui, de même que pour Alexandre, les conteurs orientaux mirent en oeuvre les ressources d’une imagination exubérante’.<sup>103</sup> If we set Gregory aside, the only other extant Christian applications of the Julian–Alexander parallel occur in the ecclesiastical historians Philostorgius and Socrates Scholasticus, both writing some seventy or eighty years after Julian’s death. By then, the essentials of the ‘Julian legend’ that Gregory’s invectives helped to shape were already in place—and the claims of Philostorgius and Socrates must be read in that light.

Philostorgius’ *History* was completed sometime within the period 425 and 433. It was later suppressed as heretical and only survives indirectly, for the most part in a ninth-century summary by Photius. The Philostorgian testimonies at issue here, however, are not found in Photius’ summary; they

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<sup>101</sup> E.g. Athenagoras, *Leg.* 28.2; Minuc. Fel. *Oct.* 21.3, with Beaujeu, comm. *ad loc.*; Aug. *CD* 8.5.27, cf. *ibid.* 8.27.12.

<sup>102</sup> Plutarch (*Alex.* 28.6) and Arrian (*Anab.* 7.29.3) were themselves inclined to rationalize the claim as politically motivated, though in a more indulgent spirit.

<sup>103</sup> Bidez (1930) v; cf. van Nuffelen (2002) 145–6 on Greg. *Orr.* 4 and 5: ‘[L]eur but n’est évidemment pas de rapporter les actes historiques de Julien ... Gregoire veut démolir la mémoire de l’empereur. Son moyen préféré, et la force de ses discours, est d’accabler Julien d’accusations reconnaissables par tous, auxquelles s’ajoutent de fortes exagérations. Il calque, par exemple, sa description de la mort de Julien sur celle d’Alexandre le Grand, qui dans ses dernières convulsions voulait se jeter dans l’eau ... pour faire croire qu’il était monté au ciel’.

have passed down through another source, the *Artemii passio*, a work of hagiography that purportedly records the exploits of a Christian martyred in Julian's reign. The *Artemii passio* was originally composed the seventh century, then re-worked and much expanded in the eighth.<sup>104</sup> It is essentially a pious fiction, but to lend historical colour to its narrative the eighth century expander packed it out with passages excerpted from Philostorgius' *History*. For our purposes, two such borrowings are relevant.

**Pr** (= *Art. passio* 24 = ad Philost. VII.4c = p. 83, 4ff. Bidez = pp. 94–5 Amidon)

The passage recounts Julian's journey through Asia Minor *en route* to Antioch in summer 362: 'Crossing over the mountain called Taurus he came to the cities of Cilicia, and drawing close to the travelling station at Issus he encamped there in imitation [*μιμησάμενος*] of Alexander of Macedon; for at that very place at Issus Alexander also organized his war against Darius the king of Persia, and by defeating him made the site well known. From there he [Julian] traversed the Gulf of Issus and came to Tarsus.'

Brute facts of geography render **Pr** immediately suspect. Its account of Julian's movements *en route* to Antioch has gone hopelessly awry: it postulates not just a laborious detour from Mt. Taurus to Issus, but then an utterly pointless westward journey all the way back to Tarsus, *away* from Antioch. That is absurd. Philostorgius himself need not be saddled with this geographical nonsense; it has been acutely observed that the muddle arises from the clumsiness with which the compiler of the *Artemii passio* wove Philostorgius' report of Julian's *imitatio* at Issus into its narrative.<sup>105</sup> But Philostorgius' implication that Julian made a special point of encamping at Issus in order to imitate Alexander is suspect in itself. It is not just that it is unique (Ammianus and Libanius, significantly, make no mention of Issus in this connexion); the simple fact is that Issus lay squarely on the normal route from Tarsus to Antioch, and Ammianus specifies that Julian took that route (22.9.14); so Julian would have naturally and inevitably passed through Issus and used its travelling station on his way. As he did so, he must surely have reflected on Alexander, but that would connote nothing extraordinary; he

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<sup>104</sup> See Lieu and Monserrat (1996) 217–18. Their volume includes a translation by Mark Vermes of the *Artemii passio*; the passages cited below are quoted from his version, with occasional modifications. In the recent translation of Philostorgius' history by Amidon (2007) the passages are integrated into the text of Photius' summary of the work at pp. 94–5 and 110.

<sup>105</sup> See Lane Fox (1997) 249.

would be doing no more than Cicero had done four centuries earlier on his travels in the same vicinity.<sup>106</sup> In itself, then, **P1** certainly does not constitute reliable factual evidence of *imitatio Alexandri* by Julian.

The second Philostorgian item asserts not just imitation of Alexander, but a deluded passion to emulate him:

**P2** (= *Art. passio* 69 = ad Philost. VII.15a = p. 100, 29ff. Bidez = p. 110 Amidon)

Julian has now Antioch entered Persian territory: ‘Julian set out from Antioch with all his army and marched against Persia. And having captured [καταλαβών] the city of Ctesiphon, he expected after accomplishing a great feat to pass on to other, mightier, deeds. The accursed emperor did not realize he had been tricked. For having acquired a devilish [διαβολικόν] love of idol-madness [εἰδωλομανία], and hoping through his godless “gods” to remain emperor for a long time and to become a new Alexander, and to overcome the Persians and to obliterate the name and race of the Christians for all time, he fell victim to his own overweening purpose.’

Here again, the writer’s claim is predicated on an egregious factual error: Ctesiphon, of course, was never taken. Again, the blunder seems too gross to be easily ascribed to Philostorgius himself: Ctesiphon’s illusory fall belongs to the realm of the popular ‘Julian legend’,<sup>107</sup> and the perpetrator of the error in **P2** is probably the compiler of the *Artemii passio*. But in any event, an assertion in a fifth-century Christian text that Julian had foolishly entertained hopes of becoming a ‘new Alexander’ on the strength of his expedition’s initial successes and his misplaced trust in his gods can carry very little weight *per se*—and there is nothing in any extant earlier testimony that asserts as much. That is not to deny that Philostorgius at **P2** probably owes something to an earlier source now lost: his story, we shall shortly see, has a close parallel (= **SS** below) in the history published by his near-contemporary Socrates Scholasticus; and the parallel is best explained on the hypothesis that both are indebted to an earlier source, or sources.<sup>108</sup> Some lost Christian text is

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<sup>106</sup> Cic. *Att.* 5.20: *Castra ... habuimus ea ipsa, quae contra Darium, habuerat apud Issum Alexander, imperator haud paulo melior quam aut tu aut ego.*

<sup>107</sup> The fall features prominently in the Syriac ‘Julian-Romance’, on which see Drijvers (1994) 201–14; Gollancz (1928) 181–2 translates the relevant passage.

<sup>108</sup> Socrates’ history was probably published in 439, Philostorgius’ between 425 and 433, so the possibility exists that when Socrates wrote *HE* 3.21 (= **SS**) he was drawing directly on **P2**: but the parallel is not exact, and Philostorgius is not among the authors Socrates ever names as sources. Perhaps, though, he would not have cared to confess a

not precluded,<sup>109</sup> but it might well be that Philostorgius at **P2** was aiming to subvert a flattering posthumous representation of Julian that he had encountered in a Greek pagan author. Eunapius' *History*, for instance, was known to Philostorgius;<sup>110</sup> in the far background, perhaps, there was Libanius' contorted claim in the *Epitaphios* that after the withdrawal from Ctesiphon Julian had 'conceived the idea of seeing and passing through Gaugamela, with or without a victory there that would be compared to Alexander's (= **L6**). But whatever the particular lines of textual influence on **P2** may have been, the value of the passage as factual evidence about Julian is clearly dubious: its historical interest lies rather in its distinctive Christian twists—its implications that Julian hoped to exploit the prestige conferred by Alexander's name to obliterate the Christian enemy at home, and that the aspiration to emulate him was bound up with a 'love of idol-madness'. In Julian's case, 'idol-madness' (εἰδωλομανία) might conceivably connote not just standard pagan cult, but the theurgic rituals by which he and his Neoplatonist friends had thought to animate statues;<sup>111</sup> there is perhaps a hint, then, that deceitful δαίμονες evoked at those rituals had planted the delusion in Julian's mind.

Socrates Scholasticus strongly implies something of this sort in the *History* he published in 439, a few years after Philostorgius completed his. Socrates makes the Julian–Alexander association only once. Like Philostorgius at **P2**, he connects it closely with events at Ctesiphon. Julian, he says, had besieged the city, and the Persian king was making desperate diplomatic overtures. But Julian refused to negotiate:

**SS** (= Socr. *HE* 3.21.7 = *PG* 67.432c)

'Trusting in certain divinations that his constant companion the philosopher Maximus cited as proofs, he imagined that his fame [δόξα] would equal and even exceed that of Alexander of Macedon, and so he spurned the entreaties of the Persians. In accordance with the teaching of Pythagoras and Plato on the transmigration of souls, he supposed that he was possessed of Alexander's soul, or rather that he himself *was* Alex-

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debt to a heretical source: Philostorgius was a Eunomian Arian (on which point, see below, pp. 83–4).

<sup>109</sup> The voluminous early fifth-century *Christian History* by Philip Sidetes (author also of a refutation of Julian's *Contra Galilaeos*) is a possibility: Socrates, at least, was acquainted with this work (*HE* 7.27).

<sup>110</sup> See Bowersock (1978) 117, qualified in Paschoud, *Zosime* (1979) 204. There is reason to think (see above, p. 71) that Eunapius' *History* had probably flattered Julian's memory with the Alexander-comparison in its account of the Battle of Strasbourg.

<sup>111</sup> Smith (1995) 101–2, 112.

ander, in another body. This belief [οἴησις] deluded him and now caused him to reject the entreaties of the Persian king.’

A basic similarity with **P2** is plain. But in Socrates’ version, Julian’s vain-glory has toppled into madness: he acts not just in the hope of surpassing Alexander’s fame, but in the deluded conviction that he literally *is* Alexander reborn. This extraordinary suggestion is unique to Socrates, and of a different order to anything we have met so far. It needs close scrutiny, because several scholars have regarded it as revealing evidence of the historical Julian’s mentality.<sup>112</sup> In my view, it is better construed as a house of straw that Socrates fabricated on the basis of highly contorted readings of some specific texts, most of which we have noticed already. One work in the background was presumably Julian’s own satire, *Caesars*, with its qualified praise of Alexander: elsewhere, Socrates cites this piece by name and declares it the product of a ‘sick mind’—albeit with attendant claims that show scant attention to *Caesars*’ actual content or literary form.<sup>113</sup> Conceivably, a lost poetic text composed by a soldier in the emperor’s entourage impinged as well: the chapter of Socrates’ *History* mocking Julian’s conviction that he was the reincarnated Alexander goes on to describe the circumstances of his death, and on that score it refers to a poem by one Callistus, ‘a soldier serving in the emperor’s bodyguard who composed an account of his achievements [ἱστορήσας τὰ κατ’ αὐτόν] in epic verse’.<sup>114</sup> Poetry is not an accomplishment that one immediately associates with an imperial bodyguard, but

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<sup>112</sup> Baynes (1955) 347; Athanassiadi (1981) 193; Marcone (1979) 343–4. Browning (1976) 190 postulated that Maximus’ assurance that Julian was a reincarnation of Alexander ‘answered some of [Julian’s] greatest emotional needs’ and was accepted by him at a subconscious level. Bidez (1930) 274 had also guardedly credited Socrates’ report, on the assumption that his chronology is confused; he surmised that Maximus had delivered a relevant oracle a year or more earlier (a re-dating surely partly intended to support Bidez’s thesis (*ibid.* 272) that Maximus’ influence over Julian at Constantinople in spring/summer 362 stimulated in him ‘un fanatisme étranger à l’esprit hellénique dont [Julien] se croyait pénétré’).

<sup>113</sup> Socr. *HE* 3.23 (*PG* 67.440b), claiming (incredibly) that Julian mocked the memory of Marcus Aurelius in *Caesars*, and that he had composed it in emulation of Porphyry’s *Against the Christians*.

<sup>114</sup> Socr. 3.21 (*PG* 67.443a). Callistus is otherwise unattested—*qua* poet, at least: Seeck (*RE* Suppl. IV.864) and *PLRE* I (s.v. ‘Callistus 1’) identify him with the ‘Callistio’ attested as a legal *assessor* attached to the cultured Secundus Salutius, Julian’s close friend and *PPO*. Salutius himself, we may note, was the dedicator of a Latin inscription praising Julian’s military prowess in quasi-epic style (*ILS* 454, from Ancyra): *domino totius orbis Iuliano Augusto, ex oceano Britannico vi[is] per barbaras gentes strage resistentium patefactis adusque Tigridem una aestate transvecto, Saturninus Secundus v[ir] c[larissimus praefectus] praet[orio Orientis], d[evotus] n[umemi] m[aiestati]q[ue]*.

men of liberal education did sometimes serve in the corps of *domestici et protectores*;<sup>115</sup> at any rate, a poem purportedly written by someone who had served in it under Julian clearly existed.<sup>116</sup> Julian might perhaps have been commemorated as a 'new' or 'reborn' Alexander in that poem—but since Socrates says nothing specific on that score, there is no proof: he is our sole witness to the poem's existence. For our purposes, that does not matter: the crucial authors in Socrates' mind, I submit, were Gregory and Libanius.

The decisive clue is Socrates' insistence that Julian was prompted to believe he was Alexander 'in another body' by his theurgic mentor Maximus and by his occult Neoplatonism and Neopythagoreanism. Philostorgius had only talked loosely of 'idol-madness' as a causal factor; Socrates is far more specific, and clearly drawing on another source, and in this case there is an obvious candidate. It is highly likely that Socrates is building on two passages from Gregory Nazianzen: the passage in *Against Julian II* which makes Julian's 'fellow-initiates' complicit in his attempt to jump into the Tigris in imitation of Alexander (= **GN**); and the colourful account in *Against Julian I* of the young Julian's theurgic initiation by a 'so-called sage, a consummate trickster'—which in context must surely refer to Maximus of Ephesus.<sup>117</sup> Socrates was demonstrably familiar with *Against Julian II*; at the close of his account of Julian's reign, he quotes an entire chapter from it *verbatim*<sup>118</sup> (and since he specifies that he is quoting from 'the second' of the two invectives, it beggars belief that he had not also read the first). He quotes the chapter, moreover, in the course of a lengthy refutation of Libanius' praises of Julian in the *Epitaphios*.<sup>119</sup> The *Epitaphios*, too, dwells on Julian's initiation into the theurgic mysteries at the hands of mentors 'steeped in Plato' (*Lib. Or.* 18.18), and we have already observed the rhetorical flourish with which it ends: it makes the deceased Julian compare himself to 'Alexander [son] of Zeus', and asserts that he lives on in the heavens as the 'nurseling and companion' of the gods.<sup>120</sup> Socrates does not mention Libanius by name when he ridi-

<sup>115</sup> Ammianus is the classic case (but see also the letter of Julian to one Leontius, (*Ep.* 11 [152 Bidez]), promoted to membership of the corps; the letter treats the addressee as a reader able to appreciate its allusions to Herodotus and Homer.

<sup>116</sup> Socrates cites a specific detail in it; he says Callistus wrote that a *δαίμων* had cast the spear that killed Julian. There is an oddity, however, in what Socrates says: on the face of it, Callistus was an admirer, but the claim that Julian was killed by supernatural agency would seem better suited to a Christian author revelling in Julian's death; perhaps the poem of 'Callistus the bodyguard' was a Christian imposture.

<sup>117</sup> *Greg. Naz. Or.* 4.55 (*PG* 35.577c), noted above, p. 75; for the setting, Smith (1995) 130.

<sup>118</sup> *Socr.* 3.23 (*PG* 67.440b–441b) = *Greg. Or.* 5.23–4 (*PG* 35.692a–693a).

<sup>119</sup> *Socr.* 3.22–3 (*PG* 67.437a–449a)

<sup>120</sup> *Lib. Or.* 18.297 [= **L8**], 304, 308; see above, p. 60.

cules Julian as a would-be reincarnated Alexander at **SS**, but when he wrote the passage he surely had the end of the *Epitaphios* firmly in mind, as a pagan falsehood to be reviled and rebutted. The proof lies two chapters ahead in the *History*: Socrates there quotes directly from the close of the *Epitaphios*<sup>121</sup> and scorns its deification of a mortal as a degraded practice in which pagans commonly indulge. He could cite many such examples (he continues) from anthologies of myths and oracles: for instance, ‘when the Amphictionic council courted favour with Alexander as he was crossing into Asia’, had not ‘the δαίμων at Delphi’ flattered him with an oracle that called him ‘a lord [ἄναξ] concealed in a human body, fathered by Zeus as his noblest offspring’?<sup>122</sup> Socrates may have chosen this particular example with an eye to a tradition, current in his day, that Julian had sent his friend Oribasius to Delphi to restore and consult the oracle in advance of the Persian campaign.<sup>123</sup> In any event, the fact that his immediate purpose in adducing it was to rebut an assertion of Julian’s divinity that he had read in Libanius’ *Epitaphios* must surely guide our interpretation of the ridiculing of Julian at **SS**; in denying the reality of his ‘likeness to Alexander’, Socrates was writing partly in reaction to an idealizing image encountered in the *Epitaphios*—in this case, the passage in which Julian is made to liken himself to Alexander. Socrates intended to refute this image by tracing Julian’s ‘delusion’ to the influence of a mischievous Neoplatonist coterie; and he chose to explain the ‘delusion’ in this way because he had read and relished Gregory Nazianzen’s fantasy that the same coterie had encouraged the dying emperor to disappear, ‘Alexander-like’, beneath the waters of the Tigris, and thereby trick posterity into thinking him a god. In short, Socrates’ picture of Julian as a would-be Alexander ‘in another body’ is literary shadow-boxing by an ecclesiastical historiographer indulging in a ‘battle of the books’; it is a conceit constructed on the back of earlier conceits devised by Gregory and Libanius. As evidence of Julian’s actual attitude to Alexander, it counts for nothing.

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<sup>121</sup> Socr. 3.23 (*PG* 67.445a), quoting *Lib Or.* 18.308 (‘nurseling and companion of the daemons’).

<sup>122</sup> Socr. 3.23 (*PG* 67.448b). Plutarch reports a visit to Delphi by Alexander in late 336 BC (*Plut. Alex.* 14.6, with Hamilton [1969] *ad loc.*). Its historicity (sometimes doubted) should be granted; but Plutarch knew nothing of the four-line hexameter ‘oracle’ that Socrates (uniquely) quotes; indeed, the whole point of Plutarch’s story requires that no verse-oracle was issued on this occasion. The oracle cited by Socrates (= Parke and Wormell (1956) II, no. 509], is patently a later (3rd/4th cent.?) invention (*ibid.*, I.242 n. 23).

<sup>123</sup> Cedrenus (*PG* 121.580a: drawing on Philostorgius) and Theodoret (*HE* 3.21) allude to this story, which arguably has a factual core; see Gregory (1983) 355–66, Smith (1995) 285 n. 31.

I traced earlier the Julian–Alexander comparison’s passage from rhetoric to historiography in the pagan testimonies. A similar pattern is disclosed in the Christian sources; Socrates builds on Gregory’s invective and reacts against Libanian panegyric. But there are some basic features common to the representation of Julian as an Alexander-emulator in Gregory, Philostorgius and Socrates that we can contrast with the pagan testimonies. All three of them connect it intimately with his failure and death; in their eyes, it marks the hubris that must inevitably destroy the Apostate. And whereas Libanius and Ammianus allude to particulars in the mainstream historiographic and biographical accounts of Alexander, the Alexander adduced in what survives of Philostorgius and in Socrates is a hazy figure of popular legend. For them, he seems on the face of it to serve simply as a cipher for the military glory they assume Julian to have coveted to the point of madness; they appear indifferent to Alexander in himself, and to his aptness as an exemplar for a Roman emperor in the first place. But there is arguably a subtext: if Julian’s desire for unlimited conquest disclosed an ‘overweening purpose’ [P2], did not Alexander’s, too, by implication? In Philostorgius’ case, more may have been made of the Julian–Alexander parallel than the surviving fragments of his account of Julian indicate—and in his case, at least, particular sectional Christian affiliations probably coloured his basic view of Alexander. As a Eunomian Arian, he viewed all adherents to the Nicene Creed as apostates from the true apostolic faith, and counted himself a member of a persecuted group within the Church. The Eunomians are the heroes of his history, and he represents their position in the post-Constantinian Christian empire as analogous to that of the Maccabean rebels who stood firm against the Hellenizing tendencies that had come to threaten ‘true’ Judaism in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes; ‘th[at] beleaguered faithful minority of monotheist Jews [wa]s for him the abiding image of the true Church’—and at a deep level, accordingly, ‘Alexander always remained for him the ominous figure [portrayed at the start of 1 Maccabees] whose conquests had brought Hellenistic culture and its alluring polytheism to the Jews’.<sup>124</sup>

Philostorgius’ Eunomianism makes him a special case. For Christian writers in general, though, Alexander’s love of fame and putative claims to divinity could potentially offer a vivid *exemplum* of the sin of pride—and by the late fourth century, perhaps, pagan pride especially; on one view, the legendary Alexander was serving in pagan circles by then as an symbol of

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<sup>124</sup> I quote Amidon (2007) xix.



‘pagan resistance’ and pagan culture.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps he occasionally did, for some—but the basic hypothesis of late fourth century ‘pagan resistance’ is very dubious,<sup>126</sup> and as a cultural emblem Alexander was simply too multifaceted to be appropriated by any sectional ideological interest. One certainly cannot postulate a uniquely or uniformly critical ‘Christian’ attitude to Alexander in late antiquity. The legendary Alexander’s glamour plainly spoke to Christians as well as pagans: its popular appeal is witnessed by the habit of wearing Alexander-coins as good-luck charms,<sup>127</sup> by the influence of the Alexander portrait-type in Christian art,<sup>128</sup> and by the wide circulation of the *Alexander Romance* in versions dutifully shorn of overtly pagan detail.<sup>129</sup> Even an austere bishop could acknowledge and exploit this popular appeal: Basil commends Alexander in his homilies for his abstinence in the face of Darius’ beautiful wife and daughters.<sup>130</sup> That said, there had always been a strand in Christian discourse that pictured Alexander as insanely arrogant,<sup>131</sup> and some of the judgements passed on him by Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries recycle with gusto the long-familiar charges of vainglory, intemperance and cruelty levelled at him by pagan moralizers:<sup>132</sup> for Augustine and Orosius, he was the earth’s greatest ‘pirate’, a monster ‘constantly thirsting for new carnage’,<sup>133</sup> and Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine* (1.7.1–2) is especially severe: he casts Alexander as a murderous debauchee who had ‘waded through blood’ until providentially killed off young ‘in a hostile, foreign land’, dispatched by fate ‘so that he might no longer harm the human race’.

Eusebius’ image of Alexander has its points of similarity with the Julian of Socrates’ history—a vain and tyrannical persecutor prone to have Chris-

<sup>125</sup> Stoneman (1999) 181–2, citing: *SHA, Thirty Tyrants*, 14.3–6; the *ALEX. FILIUS DEI* legends on some late (ca. AD 400) contorniates; and a Lebanese mosaic depicting Alexander’s (Christ-like?) nativity (see Ross (1963) 1–21).

<sup>126</sup> Cameron (1976).

<sup>127</sup> John Chrys., *Ad illuminandos catachesis*, 2.5 (*PG* 49.240), attests and deplores the practice at Antioch, ca. 390; cf. *SHA* (n. 125 above): *pace* Stoneman (1999) 181, it is not clear that John is speaking of an exclusively pagan practice.

<sup>128</sup> See Killerich (1993) 90, on a mosaic depicting the martyr Porphyrius in Alexander-style at Thessaloniki, ca. AD 380–95

<sup>129</sup> Cracco Ruggini, (1965) 4, 21ff., with Stoneman (1999) 174–5, 179.

<sup>130</sup> Basil, *De leg. libr. gent.* 5; cf. Ammianus 24.4.27 (= **A3** above).

<sup>131</sup> Tatian, *ad Graec.* 2; Clement, *Paedagogus* 1.7.55, with Fears (1974) 114–6.

<sup>132</sup> See Klein (1987) 925–99; Dopp (1999) 193–216. On the pagan moralizers, see above, p. 52.

<sup>133</sup> ‘pirate’: Aug. *CD* 4.4, a recycled conceit (cf. Cic. *Rep.* 3.24; Sen. *Benef.* 1.13); ‘thirsting’: Orosius 3.18.10.

tians tortured in his presence when enraged, and possibly killed off by supernatural intervention (3.12–13; 19; 21). Socrates was perhaps not deaf to these resonances when he mocked Julian as a would-be Alexander reincarnate: the *Life of Constantine* was a text he knew well.<sup>134</sup> But that is not to imply that Socrates was necessarily predisposed to take a hostile view of Alexander: it is simply to observe that there were many strands to Alexander as a stock *exemplum*, and that positive and negative strands could coexist in a single allusion, and that some would have resonances for a Christian that they would not have for a pagan. Moreover, if Socrates had wished, he could have made greater play in general with the Julian–Alexander parallel than he actually did, by the simple expedient of drawing it more than once. **SS** mocks Julian's mad vainglory in his last days; but acts of vainglory, and of rage and harshness, figure repeatedly in Socrates' account of the earlier reign as well (*HE* 3.1; 12; 19), and he never cares to adduce Alexander in any of these connexions. Gregory, too, only adduces the comparison once, and only obliquely, without mention of Alexander's name. One rather wonders if the parallel weighed as heavily with either of them—or for that matter, with Philostorgius—as it has with some of their modern readers. In all three, Christian sensitivities obviously guided the terms of the comparison; but they were sensitivities that focussed on the figure of Julian, not Alexander. All three deployed the comparison as 'proof' of Julian's arrogance and folly, but nothing in any of their reports tells us anything substantial about what Alexander had counted for in Julian's own thought or imperial publicity.

#### IV. Alexander's Image in Julian's Writings: the Hypothesis of Emulation Reviewed

On our reading of the external testimonies, then, only Libanius and Ammianus say anything that merits serious consideration as evidence of Alexander-imitation in features of Julian's public style or action—and it amounts to singularly little: occasional quotation of a proverb traditionally ascribed to Alexander (**A4**); and possibly, at a late point in the Persian expedition, a short detour contemplated (but never actually made) to visit the battle-site of Gaugamela (**L6**). Both writers were disposed, of course, to discern some admirably 'Alexander-like' character traits in Julian (superabundant energy and self-discipline, personal bravery, generosity to friends, respect for culture)—and Libanius sometimes represents him as seeking to emulate Alexander's achievements. But that suggestion figures mainly in rhetorical set-pieces idealizing the dead Julian as a lost champion of Greek culture; the

<sup>134</sup> Eusebius' *VC* is cited at Socr. *HE* 1.17 and 23; 2.21, 5.22; 7.32.

Libanian speeches addressed to Julian in his lifetime imply much less (and in two texts which one might particularly expect to mirror Julian's own wishes and publicity—the panegyrics that he himself commissioned—Alexander is never mentioned). Only the *Embassy*, composed in the heyday of the Persian campaign, is really at issue—and insofar as it ascribes (or commends) *aemulatio Alexandri* to Julian, it does so in the hackneyed tropes that Libanius, and others before him, had used to flatter earlier Constantinian emperors;<sup>135</sup> it praises him hyperbolically as a ruler whose military accomplishments have already eclipsed Alexander's; and as a more philanthropic one to boot. Libanius would not have written these praises unless he thought they would please Julian, of course, and he may have been echoing contemporary 'sparks thrown off by Julian's own publicity'<sup>136</sup> that are lost to us now; but that does nothing to establish that Julian was unusually predisposed to play on the 'likeness to Alexander' theme in his publicity, or privately obsessed by thoughts of rivalling Alexander. In the end, these claims must turn on one's judgement of what Julian's own written testimony reveals (his extant coinage, to be clear, offers nothing on these counts).

Alexander's name crops up quite often in Julian's writings, and some of the references undoubtedly disclose an admiring interest in him—but not, on the face of it, uncritical interest or unqualified admiration. Julian was an unusually well educated emperor: he was keenly interested in philosophy and aspired to rule as a philosopher of sorts (*Ep.* 1 (13 Bidez)), and some of his remarks echo the conventional moralizing criticisms of Alexander's character and conduct. He was also quite well read in history, at least as Greek writers transmitted it: as well as Plutarch's historical biographies (among them, the *Alexander*), he had read some of the classic Greek historiographers, and he could pointedly observe the distance between sober historical facts and what panegyrists and declaimers did with them.<sup>137</sup> But he was himself an adroit writer well versed in rhetoric, and his references to Alexander, admiring or critical, cannot be treated as transparent expressions of his underlying personal convictions: they need to be read with an eye to the literary and political contexts in which they occur, and to the particular readers he had in mind. In winter 356/7, for instance, a year after his appointment as Caesar by Constantius, Julian wrote a panegyric of Constantius. It praises him as 'no whit inferior to [Alexander] in greatness of soul (*μεγαλοψυχία*) and love of glory (*φιλοτιμία*)' (*Or.* 1.41c), as quite his equal in regal generosity (43c)—and as distinctly his superior in temperance and filial piety:

<sup>135</sup> See above, pp. 51–2, 58–9.

<sup>136</sup> Lane Fox (1997) 250.

<sup>137</sup> *Jul. Ep.* 14, with Smith (1995) 13.

'[For] they say that Philip's son Alexander, after he destroyed the might of Persia, not only turned to an increasingly boastful way of life and displayed an arrogance [*ὑποψία*] offensive to everyone, but came to despise even his own father, and the whole human race; for he deemed himself worthy to be called the son of [Zeus] Ammon [...] and he punished old comrades who failed to learn to flatter and kow-tow to him more cruelly [*πικρότερον*] than captives taken in battle' (45d–46a).

In this panegyric context, the virtues and vices ascribed to Alexander disclose nothing about Julian's own underlying attitude to him (or to the speech's recipient, for that matter: Julian privately hated and despised Constantius). They merely disclose an orator manipulating the 'likeness to Alexander' theme in *topoi* of the sort that had earlier been applied by Libanius to Constantius, and by Eusebius to Constantine.<sup>138</sup> Even where remarks made by Julian are clearly modelled on standard 'philosophic' criticisms, their force is often hard to judge. In *Or.* 2, for instance (a later panegyric of Constantius, composed in 358), he grants that Alexander and Achilles were brave and noble—'but only to Socrates, I think, and to a few of his emulators (men truly happy and blessed), was it granted to shed that ultimate garment—the love of glory [*φιλοτιμία*]' (*Or.* 2.96b). There is patently a debt here (as often elsewhere in Julian) to Dio Chrysostom: in Dio's *Fourth Oration on Kingship*, Alexander, 'the most glory-loving of men', is taught by Diogenes the Cynic that most men's lives are blighted by one or another of three deluded aims: sensual self-indulgence, or material acquisitiveness, or lastly—especially delusive for its ostensible high-mindedness—*φιλοτιμία*.<sup>139</sup> Elsewhere in his writings, Julian sketches and fulsomely commends the idealizing 'Cynicism' of Dio's Diogenes;<sup>140</sup> 'according to tradition', he observes, Diogenes' way of life 'seemed enviable even to him who had broken the power of Persia, and who was rivalling the deeds of Heracles, and questing for a fame (*φιλοτιμούμενος*) that would surpass Achilles' (*Or.* 7.211d)—and in his philosophic moments, Julian doubtless pondered sometimes on the hollowness of *φιλοτιμία*. In the panegyric setting of *Or.* 2, however, it is only another trope, adduced to praise Constantius for his temperance in the face of a slanderous accusation that would have enraged an Achilles, or an Alexander. In short: some remarks in Julian that ostensibly reflect a pondered moral judgement about Alexander do nothing of the kind. One needs to identify and focus on passages in which there is more at issue than manipu-

<sup>138</sup> See above, pp. 49–50 and 56. The reading of *Or.* 1.45d by Athanassiadi (1981) 192 as a 'bitter' criticism of Alexander's arrogance takes no account of these generic factors.

<sup>139</sup> Dio Chrys. *Or.* 4.83–4, 116–32.

<sup>140</sup> Jul. *Orr.* 6 and 7, *passim* (7.212b names Dio), with Smith (1995) 52–8, 63–6, 72–4.

lation of conventional *exempla* in pursuit of localized literary effects—passages in which Julian’s personal sympathies or preoccupations are arguably coming to the fore, or passages that seem indicative of thoughtful reading of the accounts of Alexander’s case in antique historiography.

Julian’s *Letter to Themistius the Philosopher*, notwithstanding the writer’s literary self-consciousness and recourse to stock *exempla*, arguably offers one such passage.<sup>141</sup> It was written in reply to a (now lost) congratulatory letter sent to Julian, either on his accession as Caesar (November 355) or when he became sole emperor (Dec. 361). The best arguments favour 355 (which would make the *Letter* the earliest item in Julian’s extant works),<sup>142</sup> but for our purposes the date of composition is less important than the fact that Julian was responding to an exhortation from a former philosophic teacher. Themistius had urged him to give up the life of secluded contemplation and apply his philosophy to affairs of state: he should emulate the likes of Solon and Lycurgus, even Heracles and Dionysus (both of whom were famously ‘models’ for Alexander himself, of course, and widely associated with him in art and literature).<sup>143</sup> Julian’s reply begins by naming two exemplary rulers whom Themistius had perhaps not explicitly adduced (*ad Them.* 253ab):

‘At one time in the past [πάλαι] I used to think that I was to rival Alexander and Marcus [Aurelius], and anyone else of conspicuous virtue [ἀρετή]—and I used to tremble with fear at the thought, terrified lest I should utterly fail to measure up to the former’s manly courage [ἀνδρεία], or to approach even remotely the latter’s perfect virtue [τελεία ἀρετή]. With that in mind, I persuaded myself that I should prefer the peaceful life of intellectual study [σχολή] ...’

On the face of it, this seems a telling autobiographical testimony. Julian avows admiration for Alexander, but without implying that he had ever conceived of him as his sole or paramount model, or as an exemplar of imperial virtue in the round: he takes Alexander to epitomize one aspect of

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. Bidez (1930) 206, on the entire *Letter*: ‘Ne serait-là que de la littérature? Personne n’a songé à le soutenir. On sent que Julien parle ici avec une pleine conscience de la gravité du moment’.

<sup>142</sup> Julian’s modern biographers (Bidez (1930) 205; Browning (1978) 129; Bowersock (1978) 31; Athanassiadi-Fowden (1981) 90) have preferred the later date, but Barnes and Vanderspoel (1981) 187–9 and Bradbury (1987) 235–51 supply strong arguments for 355; the earlier dating is accepted by Smith (1995) 28; Hunt (1995) 291 n. 18; Heather and Moncur (2001) 139 n. 7.

<sup>143</sup> *Ep. ad Them.* 253c–254b, 262d; for Alexander’s worship and emulation of Heracles and Dionysus (both esp. appealing, as sons of Zeus by mortals) see Fredricksmeyer (2003) 262–7, 273, 277–8; cf. Stewart (2003) 34, 50–3, 60.

imperial virtue, martial courage; the philosophic Marcus possesses 'perfect virtue'. He also clearly represents his impulse to rival either of them as a thing of the past, a youthful ambition abandoned a good while back<sup>144</sup>—and he says nothing elsewhere in the letter to dispel that impression: by the time of writing, he implies, he knows his own limitations and is no longer disposed to set himself idealized targets that he is bound to miss. There is an element of false modesty in that, no doubt, but we cannot explain the passage away entirely on that account—or not as far as Alexander is concerned, at least. Marcus is not mentioned again in the *Letter*, but Alexander is, twice. In the first case (256b–257b), Julian explicitly appeals to 'the Stoics' conception [ἔνστασις] of εὐδαιμονία: to be truly happy, he insists, one must disregard 'indifferent things', not least among them fame in other men's eyes—the acquisition of which rests in part on the workings of Fortune (Τύχη), and is hence a thing which a truly wise man (Julian names Diogenes here) will hold of no account. Moreover, the ultimate test of a man's mettle is not his capacity to withstand a hostile Fortune, but whether he proves himself worthy of a kindly one; and on this test, 'even that "Greatest King" who conquered Asia was ensnared—he showed himself more harsh [χαλεπώτερος] and insolent than Darius and Xerxes, once he had become master of their empire'.

Vainglory in the fair-seeming guise of φιλοτιμία, harshness, arrogance—these are the same criticisms, to be sure, as those adduced in Julian's panegyrics of Constantius, and in those texts, I have argued, they lacked any force as evidence of Julian's personal views: in themselves, they are entirely conventional items in the repertoire of Alexander-exempla. So too, Alexander's Fortune was a hoary topos for epideictic orators when they reviewed the topic of luck in human affairs: Ammianus, too, we noticed earlier, evoked it *sotto voce* in his *elogium* of Julian; and Plutarch, of course, had devoted two set-piece essays to rebutting the suggestion that his military success owed more to his Fortune than to any inherent virtue.<sup>145</sup> In the context of the *Letter to Themistius*, though, the criticisms are underpinned by appeal to a specific philosophic argument; moreover, they are clearly meant to hark back to, and amplify on, the letter's opening. The second subsequent men-

<sup>144</sup> The implication of the word order in the Greek (μοι πάλαι μὲν οἰομένῳ ... φρικτή τις προσηει καὶ δέος) is plain: the thought, as well as the fear it produced, belongs in the past.

<sup>145</sup> For Alexander as a stock *exemplum* in 'Fate' discourse, see, e.g., Favorinus, *On Fate* (= [Dio Chrys.] *Or.* 64), 19–24, esp. 20–1 ('faults'); Amm. Marc 25.4.26; Plut. *De Alex. Magni fortuna aut virtute* I–II, especially at I.5–12, speciously representing Alexander as a paragon of philosophic ἀρετή in word and action. For the character of this piece (a work quite likely known to Julian), see Hamilton (1969) xxi–xxxiii. Dio Chrysostom, too, had written *On the Virtues of Alexander* (an eight-book work, now lost: we do not know its argument).

tion of Alexander, towards the end of it, leaves no doubt about that (*ad Them.* 264d–265a):

‘I would say that [Socrates] accomplished greater deeds than Alexander ... Did any one ever gain salvation through Alexander’s victory? Was any city better governed because of it, or any individual made a better person by it? [No ...] But even to this day, everyone who gains salvation through philosophy gains it thanks to Socrates ... This is not just my view, either: Aristotle realized it and voiced it long before me, it would seem, when he said he had as much cause to take pride in his treatise on the gods as [in having tutored] the man who destroyed the power of Persia.<sup>146</sup> And surely he was right: for military victory is owed chiefly to courage [*ἀνδρεία*] and to Fortune (and we could add, if you like, to a dogged practical intelligence [*φρόνησις*]); but to attain true opinions about [the nature of] divinity, that is a task that requires perfect virtue [*ἀρετὴ τελεία*].’

‘Perfect virtue’ was precisely what the start of the *Letter to Themistius* had ascribed to the Stoic emperor Marcus; by the end, the implication left tacit at the start is clearer: Alexander, for all his courage, had fallen short of it, on several specified counts. We should be wary of reading too much into that: the contrast drawn with Marcus is a *relative* contrast, and it ought not to be pressed to imply an opposition; what it denies to Alexander is not virtue, but *perfect* virtue. It offers us no reason, for instance, to argue (as some have) that the supreme and paramount exemplar in Julian’s eyes, at least until a late point in his reign, was Marcus.<sup>147</sup> A passage in Ammianus, admittedly, might give that impression<sup>148</sup>—but on close reading the impression dissolves: we need to allow for the force of literary convention, and purposeful variations on it, in Ammianus’ use of the Julian–Marcus motif—and equally so, in Julian’s own representation of Marcus in the *Caesars*.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, one si-

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<sup>146</sup> Julian here echoes Plut. *Mor.* 78d (Aristotle had supposedly avowed that ‘anyone who properly understands the nature of divinity has as much right to be proud as Alexander’), but he adds a reference to an Aristotelian treatise: possibly *Phys.* vii–viii (Lacombrade, comm. ad loc. in the Budé Julien, II.i, 176), more likely a lost piece; he probably had Plut. *Alex.* 7.5–9 in mind. He doubtless picked the example with an eye to his addressee’s interests (and perhaps remembering his lectures): Themistius famously wrote paraphrases of several Aristotelian works, including *Phys.*

<sup>147</sup> E.g. Athanassiadi (1981) 191, 200–1, 224.

<sup>148</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.1.4 (see above, p. 67); cf. Eutropius 10.16.3 (Eutropius, too, had served in Julian’s Persian campaign).

<sup>149</sup> Hunt (1995) 287–98, an acute discussion.

lence in Julian's writings is eloquent on this score: there is no certain verbal reminiscence of the *Meditations* anywhere in them.<sup>150</sup> Granted, some of Julian's remarks about Alexander in the *Letter to Themistius* seem reminiscent of comments made about him in the *Meditations*: for Marcus, too, Alexander must pale in comparison to a Diogenes or Socrates; the latter were 'men [who] saw reality in its causative aspects, and whose ruling inner selves were self-determined'; Alexander belongs with Caesar, Pompey and their like—'actors in passing stage-plays [whom] no one [should] condemn us to imitate—for the task of philosophy is simplicity and modesty, not puffed-up pride'.<sup>151</sup> But Julian did not need to have read the *Meditations* to criticize Alexander's pride or deficiencies in philosophic self-control, and the tone of his comments on Alexander in the round is distinctly warmer than those of Marcus. Marcus had treated him dismissively, as a notable example of the vanity of human ambition (though no more notable or morally objectionable than many another famous figure of the past); but even in the *Letter to Themistius*, Julian's criticisms are clearly delimited by his elevation of Alexander as the epitome of martial courage. And the *Letter* was a piece addressed to a philosopher, and self-consciously written in a philosophic vein; elsewhere, Julian's comments dwell often on his signal merits and successes as a 'great-souled' soldier-king.<sup>152</sup>

Julian's philosophic allegiances, that is to say, impinge only intermittently on his discourse about Alexander. In the *Letter to Themistius*, we should be clear, he could easily have said more than he did, *pro* or *con*, about the 'philosophic' side to Alexander. Plutarch, for instance, in his biography—a work with which Julian was certainly familiar—credits Alexander with a sound philosophic education and abiding philosophic interests.<sup>153</sup> There is no mention of that in the *Letter*, and almost none in Julian's writings as a whole. One finds a fleeting allusion in a panegyric (*Or.* 3.107b) to Alexander's 'up-bringing at the hands of the wise Stagirite [Aristotle]', and a joking reference in *Caesars* to his 'Peripatetic subterfuges',<sup>154</sup> and a passing nod to the tradition

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<sup>150</sup> Bidez (1930) 214 ('[il] relisait souvent les *Pensées*...') is markedly overconfident. Bouffartigue (1992) 73–6 and Hunt (1995) 289–90, 294, 32 stress the lack of clear allusion, and imply that Julian may well not have known the work at all; Smith (1995) 42 and nn. 143–6 suspects that he did—but the convergent arguments fall short of proof.

<sup>151</sup> *Medit.* 8.3; 9.29 (cf. 6.21: once dead, Alexander was no different from his stable-lad: both had been absorbed into a cosmic matrix, or dissolved into atoms).

<sup>152</sup> E.g., *Or.* 3.107bc (the panegyric of Eusebia, 356/7); *Ep.* 47 (III Bidez) 433c (*To the Alexandrians*, late 362); cf. *Or.* 8.251a, *Ep.* 50 (82 Bidez) 446a, and *Caes. passim* (discussed below).

<sup>153</sup> *Plut. Alex.* 7–8; 27; 52–5; 64–5

<sup>154</sup> *Caes.* 330c, *in voce Sileni*, probably with the conundrums of *Plut. Alex.* 64 in mind.



that Alexander had envied Diogenes gets a passing nod (*Orr.* 6.203b; 7.211d)—but otherwise, Julian ignores the whole tradition of Alexander’s philosophic curiosity. Given the colour of Julian’s personal philosophic interests, his familiarity with Plutarch’s *Alexander*, and some of the popular stories about Alexander circulating in his day, the omission is quite striking. For Julian, ‘philosophic interests’ meant especially the search for ‘true opinions about divinity’, and Plutarch pictures Alexander as one of the elect to whom Aristotle had orally transmitted ‘secret teachings on arcane matters’: he ‘never lost the devotion to philosophy innate in him’; in Egypt, he elicits ‘secret prophecies’ from Ammon’s oracle at Siwah to learn better what his own connexion with divinity might be, and attends lectures by the (fictional) philosopher Psammon expatiating on the ‘divine element’ to be found in every human mind; in Bactria, he weeps to hear a philosophic theory proposing the existence of an infinite plurality of worlds; in India, he quizzes a band of Brahmin gymnosophists to learn their teachings.<sup>155</sup> In the popular tradition, he is treated by one of the Brahmins to a lecture on the fatuity of earthly kingship, and the passage of enlightened souls to a paradisaal after-life: ‘I myself would wish to cease making war’, he confesses to the sage, ‘but the master of my soul will not allow it’.<sup>156</sup> There was plenty in these stories that could have interested a Neoplatonist of Julian’s stripe—but significantly, none of them are touched on in his writings. His interest in Alexander in the round was quite conventionally focussed on his brilliance, energy and peerless success as a military commander. He noted ‘unphilosophic’ temperamental strands in the man, of course; but his most cutting criticisms of Alexander, we shall see, do not turn on an abstract test of perfected virtue and wisdom that only a philosophic saint could pass.

So far as the argument that Julian came to identify especially closely with Alexander is concerned, the *Letter to Themistius* is an item that could be adduced on either side. On the face of things, its measured philosophic criticisms of Alexander subvert the claim. But it might be objected that the philosophic criticisms are hand-me-down and peripheral to the issue, that what really counted in Julian’s eyes was always Alexander’s military glamour and success, and that the start of the *Letter* at least discloses a psychological impulse on Julian’s part to model himself on him—an impulse disavowed as a youthful day-dream at the time of writing, but one that might arguably have been re-ignited later: at Antioch, say, in 362, with a Persian war in the offing. (The *Letter*, after all, had probably been written a good six years earlier by a tyro who had never yet led an army: subsequent experience might have

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<sup>155</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 7.5; 8.5; 27.8–11; 64.1–65.3; *Mor.* 446d (infinite worlds).

<sup>156</sup> *Alexander Romance* (A) III.7; on Dandamis’ lecture and its Cynic affinities, Stoneman (2003) 334.

changed Julian's mind.) A claim of that sort, though, if it is to hold, requires textual support: are there any remarks about Alexander in Julianic texts written later than the *Letter* to justify it, or count against it?

Four texts can be adduced in this connexion: a couple of open letters, and two polished literary pieces. The earliest is the *Consolation to Himself on the Departure of Salutius* (*Or.* 8), written in Gaul in the winter of 358/9; by that time Julian had led a successful campaign beyond the Rhine, and had a famous victory at Strasbourg to his name. The addressee of the *Consolation*, Saturninius Secundus Salutius, was one of Julian's most intimate friends and advisors—a fellow Neoplatonist and litterateur, Julian's quaestor in Gaul until called away by Constantius (the occasion of the piece), subsequently Julian's Praetorian Prefect in the East, and a close companion on the march to Persia: here, if anywhere in a Julianic literary text (and the *Consolation* is highly literary), 'on y trouve l'expression des faits réels et des sentiments sincères'.<sup>157</sup>

In praising Salutius for his talents and loyal service as a comrade-in-arms, Julian recalls Alexander's wish that Homer could have been the 'herald' of his conquests (*Or.* 8.250d–251c):<sup>158</sup>

'But [Alexander], always despising what he had and longing for what he did not have, was scornful of his contemporaries and never content with the gifts granted to him: even if he had found a Homer [to sing his deeds] he would doubtless have yearned for the lyre of Apollo ... [Why?] Was it that the grandeur of his inherent virtue [μέγαθος ἀρετῆς ὑπαρχον], and an intelligence no less outstanding than the blessings [Fortune] gave him, drove his soul to such a pitch of ambition that he grasped at achievements beyond the range other men? Or was it rather that a kind of excess of courage and daring [τις ὑπερβολὴ τῆς ἀνδρείας καὶ θάρρους] inclined him to ostentation [ἀλαζονεία], and bordered on arrogant presumption [αὐθαδεία]? Let us leave this question aside to be a general topic for investigation for those who want either to praise him, or to blame him (if anyone thinks, indeed, that blame can aptly be applied to him). But as for myself, I am always content with what I have, and not in the least inclined to lay claim to things beyond my grasp, so I am well content when [as fine] a herald [as you] praises me ...'

<sup>157</sup> Bidez (1924) 187. The MS tradition calls the departing friend 'Sallustius', but he is in fact Julian's future *PPO* Salutius (on whom see above, n. 114); Salutius is to be distinguished from Fl. Sallustius, *cos.* 363.

<sup>158</sup> A topos (see above, n. 41): but the detail of the 'herald' seems to echo esp. Arrian (*Anab.* 1.12.1–2).

Here again, the passage is ambiguous. If we take him at his word, Julian firmly disavows any affinity with Alexander in a key trait of character, the *πόθος* for whatever lies beyond one's grasp: he is simply not like that, he says. And he allows, too, that Alexander's case could be judged in two contrasting ways, one favourable, one not. But the terms in which he describes the alternatives lean strongly towards the admiring interpretation—if there was ostentation or arrogance, it was due to an 'excess of courage'—and the very fact that it occurs to him to mention Alexander in the *Consolation* might seem significant: is he unconsciously disclosing that the case of Alexander was often in his mind, and that plodding debaters' points *pro* and *contra* no longer held much interest for him either way? Or is he simply picking up on, and sincerely disavowing to an intimate friend, a pat comparison that some orator had drawn in the wake of Strasbourg? Either interpretation might be argued—or something in-between.

The view taken in Julian's open letter *Against Nilus* is distinctly more critical. It was composed in 362, either between July and October at Antioch (Libanius knew it by October 362 at latest), or else earlier that year, at Constantinople.<sup>159</sup> Nilus, a Roman senator, had first incurred Julian's displeasure by failing to take up an offer of office at Court. He had received a curt letter on that occasion, but then made matters worse by writing back to explain and justify his conduct. At one point in his reply he had compared Julian's treatment of him unfavourably with Alexander's magnanimity. Julian's response was scathing (*In Nilum* = Ep. 50 (82 Bidez), 446a):

'Just why does the "divine"<sup>160</sup> Alexander seem so pre-eminent to you? Is it perhaps because you made yourself his imitator (*μιμητήης*) and aspired to do the [haughty] things for which the youth Hermolaus reproached him? Surely not—only a fool could suspect you capable of aspiring to that. On the contrary, in your case it must have to do with the things that Hermolaus complained of suffering [at Alexander's order], and which made him plot to kill him, it is said ... Perhaps, then, the reason why Alexander seems "great" in your eyes is that he cruelly (*πικρῶς*) murdered Callisthenes, or that Cleitus fell victim to his drunken rage—and likewise Philotas, and Parmenion. As for that business about Hector [Parmenion's son], who was suffocated in the whirlpools of the Nile in Egypt, or in the Euphrates (for there are two versions of the story)—I forbear to speak about that, or about [Alexander's] other pranks, lest I

<sup>159</sup> Wiemer (1996) 192–7 favours composition ca. May/June 362 (see above, n. 65).

<sup>160</sup> The epithet (in the Greek, *θεσπέσιος*) presumably picks up and sarcastically repeats the word from Nilus' letter to Julian; it can hardly be taken at face value in the context of the passage, and Julian nowhere else calls Alexander a god, or godlike.

should seem to be speaking ill of one who by no means conducted himself with rectitude, but who nonetheless excelled as a general in the works of war.'

This is a telling passage on several counts. It is not only much more sharply critical of Alexander than the *Consolation* (and only his military excellence, it seems, has saved him from still harsher condemnation); it is critical on specific grounds that suggest a writer conversant with a range of 'Alexander histories', and sharply aware of the distance between the legendary and the historical Alexander. The particular criticisms made in it show that Julian had read a good deal more than Plutarch on the case: he clearly knows the story (in Arrian, but not Plutarch) that Alexander had had the philosophically-inclined Royal page Hermolaus beaten and deprived of his horse for a youthful peccadillo on the hunting-field (Hermolaus had killed a boar before Alexander could cast his spear at it: Arr. *Anab.* 4.13.3); he knows the trial-speech of Hermolaus condemning Alexander as an arrogant tyrant who had executed several Companions, personally murdered another, and then demanded *proskynesis* from free-born Macedonians (*Anab.* 4.14.2); he knows how one who refused him it, the philosopher Callisthenes, was 'cruelly' murdered—tortured, bound in fetters for months, then hanged (*Anab.* 4.14.2–3); and in the case of the drowning of Parmenion's son, Hector, he knows an episode which is not reported by either Plutarch or Arrian—and he knows it in two versions, one of which no longer survives in any extant source.<sup>161</sup> Alexander is not serving merely as a conventional rhetorical *exemplum* in these comments, and they are not measuring him by some *bien-pensant* philosophic criterion: they establish that Julian had quite extensive knowledge of the historical sources, and that he was able and willing to view him with a critical historical eye on the strength of it. Moreover, he was willing to express the criticisms in a text 'given to all to read' (446b)—an open letter composed in 362 and circulating at Antioch that autumn in the midst of his preparations for a Persian war. The claim that a compulsive wish to identify himself with or to rival Alexander was fuelling Julian's ambitions at that time finds no support whatever in his *Against Nilus*, then—quite the reverse.

In two other Julianic texts composed at Antioch, Alexander is represented much more positively. In one case it is only a brief remark—but an

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<sup>161</sup> Acutely noted by Lane Fox (1997) 252 n. 91: apart from Julian, only Curtius 4.8.7–9 reports the drowning of Hector (and only in the version placing it in the Nile: Julian is a unique witness to the Euphrates variant). Quite which Alexander-historians were read by Julian besides Plutarch and Arrian it is hard to say for sure: but see Smith (2007), suggesting Praxagoras of Athens' then recent (now lost) history of Alexander as very likely to have been read by Julian.

unqualifiedly admiring one. In November 362, Julian angrily refused a petition from Alexandria that Bishop Athanasius be permitted to return to his see: in a letter sent for public proclamation ‘to our citizens of Alexandria’, he chided them at one point as forgetful of their city’s ‘god-revering’ (i.e. pagan) founder: they should be thinking not of the ‘scoundrel’ Athanasius, but of a man of very different mettle to any ‘Galilaeen’ or ‘Hebrew’—‘if Alexander had matched himself against the Romans, he would have given them a real contest’ (*Ep.* 47 [Bidez 111] 433c). That counterfactual was a topos in the rhetorical schools, but in its commendation of Alexander as a pagan champion of ‘Greeks’ the remark could be said to draw him, in a sense, in Julian’s own public image. Only in a casual sense, however, and only in a highly localized context—a message to the contemporary Christian population of Alexander’s own city, appealing rhetorically to the city’s pride in its founder and its traditionally prickly consciousness of its ‘Greekness’,<sup>162</sup> and urging its inhabitants to cherish their pagan heritage. In this setting, the least hint of criticism of Alexander would have been absurdly incongruous, and Julian never casts him elsewhere in his writings as a champion of pagan ‘Hellenism’: the remark can hardly be pressed, then, as evidence of Julian’s personal attitude to Alexander, either as a historical case or as a potential exemplar, and those who argue that by late 362 Julian had come to feel an intimate affinity with Alexander do not try to do so. They look rather to *Caesars*, a ‘fable’ (*μῦθος*) that Julian composed at this time at Antioch.

In its literary form, *Caesars* is clearly indebted to Lucian and Menippean satire: it advertises itself as a *divertissement* contributing to the seasonal festivities associated with the mid-December Saturnalia, but not an utterly frivolous one: its fable will include ‘much worth hearing’.<sup>163</sup> It pictures Romulus hosting an Olympian feast for the gods; the deceased ‘Caesars’ of Rome, from Julius to Constantine and his sons, are invited too, and for the gods’ entertainment they compete for the title of best emperor. Five emerge as prime competitors—Caesar, Augustus, Trajan, and Marcus (with Constantine tacked on for contrast, to be unmasked as a conspicuous villain). After they have spoken, each is questioned by Hermes to establish their motives and debts to Fortune, and teased intermittently by deflating remarks from Dionysus’ licenced jester, Silenus; in the end, Marcus wins by the gods’ majority vote. But as the contest begins, an outsider turns up as a sixth con-

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<sup>162</sup> It was probably an Alexandrian historian, Timagenes, whose ‘anti-Roman’ take on the counterfactual theme ‘Would Alexander have defeated the Romans if he had lived to campaign in the West?’ had provoked the famous excursus in Livy 9.16.9ff.: see Ogilvie, comm. *ad loc.*

<sup>163</sup> *Caes.* 306ab, with *Or.* 4.157c; for the literary affiliations, Bouffartigue (1992) 397ff; Smith (1995) 13, 125.

tender and prompts Silenus to wonder whether 'all these Romans can match one Greek' (316 BC): at Heracles' insistence, 'my own Alexander' joins the contest, taking the seat vacated by his would-be emulator Caracalla (expelled from the feast as a fratricide). In the end, Marcus wins the competition by the gods' majority vote—but on his own chosen pitch of military excellence, Alexander remains *Ἀνίκητος*. He stakes his claim above all on his conquest within a decade of all Persia, an enemy that 'you [Romans] have not conquered, despite fighting them for over three hundred years' (324c); when the contest is over and each of the six competitors seeks out his tutelary guide (335cd), he hastens to 'Heracles the Glorious Conqueror, whom I [always] strove to emulate, so far as a man can follow the tracks of a god' (325a), and Trajan sits down beside him; Caesar is left wandering, 'till Ares and Aphrodite took pity on him'. Alexander's intrusion into an otherwise exclusively Roman contest, and the final pairing of him with Trajan rather than Caesar, clearly reflect the writer's preoccupations: in the coming spring, he would be marching against Persia.

Given the long history of evocations of Alexander in the publicity of Roman emperors, especially when they turned their ambitions to the east, his appearance in *Caesars* is not surprising in itself: we can readily grant that Alexander has been imported into it 'to give expression to Julian's Hellenism, to associate Roman with Greek triumphs over the Persian empire'.<sup>164</sup> On one view, though, *Caesars* offers distinctly more than that—sound evidence, at last, of a deep psychological impulse on Julian's part to identify himself with him: 'the very fact that [Alexander] is included at all' in a contest between Roman 'Caesars' is reckoned proof enough.<sup>165</sup> There is good reason to dispute that claim, however, and not only on the general ground that it fails to allow for the subversively comic element in *Caesars* as a complicating factor in the historical interpretation of the piece;<sup>166</sup> it also fails to acknowledge salient details in *Caesars*' own portrait of Alexander that actually count strongly against the proposition. When Julius Caesar opens the contest with his speech of self-advertisement to the gods, he rehearses the criticism that Julian himself had emphasised in *Against Nilus*: whereas he, Julius Caesar, was celebrated for his clemency towards his rivals, and had

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<sup>164</sup> Matthews (1989) 138–9 (aptly adding the rider that 'the spirit of Alexander rose before any emperor who turned his ambitions to the east').

<sup>165</sup> Bowersock (1978) 101: cf. Athanassiadi-Fowden (1981) 192–3, 199–200, construing the 'obsession' as a sign of a psychological crisis experienced at Antioch; cf. Wirth (1978) 483–90.

<sup>166</sup> Bowersock (1982) 159 underplays the comedy as a complicating factor in the historical interpretation of the *Caesars*, judging the work and author 'essentially humourless'. Others disagree: Smith (1995) 14–15; Hunt (1995) 294 n. 24; Lane Fox (1997) 251.

shown ‘philanthropy’ to conquered cities and peoples, Alexander ‘did not even spare his friends, much less his enemies’, and had dealt outrageously ‘cruelly’ [πικρῶς] with the Thebans, razing an entire city to the ground (321d). These were familiar charges,<sup>167</sup> but in *Caesars* they recur to embarrass Alexander. He begins own speech ‘agitatedly’ (μετά τινος παραχῆς), with the heated objection that such charges come ill from the mouth of a quondam imitator (μιμητήης) of him, and at the end of it he tries to deflect them by voicing the standard defence one encountered in Plutarch and Arrian—but without refuting their substance: ‘If some things I did were cruel [πικρόν], the people involved were never innocent, but had often thwarted me in manifold ways ... and anyway, such occasional offences were attended by Remorse’.<sup>168</sup> And when Hermes quizzes him later, Silenus returns to the question; after chiding Alexander for his self-justifying tricks of speech and Peripatetic logic-chopping, his excessive drinking and his intemperate belief in his own divinity, he archly alludes to the matter of the murdered friends—but is advised to drop it by his beloved Dionysus: ‘You had better say no more, little father Silenus, or he may do to you what he did to Cleitus’ (332 BC). At this point, ‘Alexander blushed, and tears welled up in his eyes, and he fell silent: thus their conversation ended’. It is a suggestive touch: Silenus’ teasing charges are left unrefuted, and they reduce Alexander to shame and exasperated weeping in the end. Even in *Caesars*, then, the writer has a clear eye for the shortcomings as well as the merits of the historical Alexander: it is a humorous work and renders them in humorous mode, but its underlying judgement of Alexander accords well enough with those that Julian had earlier expressed in his *Letter to Themistius* and the *Consolation*, and it shows the same awareness of historical facts as the passage in the *Against Nilus*: Alexander is admired, genuinely and deeply, as a *nonpareil* of martial energy and ‘great-souled’ courage; but the substantial blemishes disclosed by the historical record are registered too—even in a work written less than three months before Julian set out for Persia. The faults count for less than the virtues, to be sure—but in Julian’s mind, they always had.

There is a sense, of course, in which Julian’s own written testimony cannot conclusively disprove the theory that he came to identify himself obses-

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<sup>167</sup> See above, **L1**, and Julian’s own *Against Nilus*.

<sup>168</sup> *Caes.* 325ab; cf. 323d. Bowersock (see above, p. 46) construes this passage *in voce Alexandri* as really a self-justifying statement in which ‘the authentic voice of Julian can be heard’; it allegedly offers an insight into Julian’s own ‘obsession with the problem of excessive severity’ as his relations with the Antiochenes deteriorated in late 362 (Bowersock (1978) 101 and (1982) 161). But the grounds of defence in the passage (‘remorse’, and the victims’ goading or thwarting of Alexander) are entirely conventional: cf. Plut. *Alex.* 13.1–3 (Thebes) 50.2; 52.1 (Cleitus); Arr. *Anab.* 4.8.4–6; 4.9.1–4; 7.29.3.

sively with Alexander. Obsessive wishes are often unconscious ones, and although Julian avowed in the *Consolation* that he was 'not inclined to lay claim to things beyond [his] grasp', it might be argued that his words were belied by his subsequent actions. The issue here turns on the strategic purpose one ascribes to his Persian expedition. On any view, it was a highly ambitious venture, intended to augment the military fame that Julian's western victories had earned him, and to win him the title 'Parthicus': 'he would return triumphant, vindicated'.<sup>169</sup> But modern scholars who study the campaign are clear that total and permanent annexation of Persia was not a realizable aim, and most have assumed that Julian was contemplating distinctly less than that. The limited military engagements and the army's movements as the sources disclose them are certainly not redolent of Alexander's grand battles or of a push ever eastward to the Indus, and they are usually construed to indicate an ultimately diplomatic objective: either a lasting peace-treaty on terms dictated by Rome, to be won by threatening or capturing Shapur's capital, Ctesiphon; or perhaps 'regime-change'—the replacement of Shapur by the Sassanian prince Hormisdas, who had taken refuge with the Romans decades earlier, and who was brought along by Julian as a high ranking member of the expedition.<sup>170</sup> But some have suspected that the standard view may be too rational, and a recent study has reopened the argument for the *possibility* (to be clear, it acknowledges the lack of any decisive textual proof) that Julian may have been trying to conquer Persia wholly and hold it as a permanent imperial possession.<sup>171</sup> The key text adduced is Libanius' *Epitaphios*—its opening regrets for 'what I and everyone hoped, that Roman governors instead of satraps would by now be running that land' (§1), and the wistful talk near its end of a now-lost might-have-been: not just 'the whole of Persia' paying tribute as a Roman province, but its inhabitants copying the dress and hairstyles and speech of their masters, and 'sophists in Susa forging Persian boys into [Greek] orators' (§282). Libanius is unquestionably alluding here to the story that thirty thousand Persian

<sup>169</sup> Amm. Marc. 22.12.2; 25.4.27; I quote Bowersock (1978) 106.

<sup>170</sup> For summary and further bibliography, see Matthews (1989) 138–40, Barnes (1998) 163–5, Potter (2004) 517, 702 n. 194. On Hormisdas' possible role in the plan, the crucial evidence is contemporary (Lib. *Ep.* 1402.2, written May/June 363; see Wiemer (1995) 226).

<sup>171</sup> Seager (1997) 262–7 takes as a 'text for discussion' Julian's early remark of 358 in a panegyric of Constantius (*Or.* 6.88b: a 'kingly' soul, if pressed to war, will not stop till he has broken his enemy's power), and argues that (i) Ammianus' imprecision and (ii) passages in Libanius (see below) render the possibility that Julian intended to conquer Persia a notion 'that deserves to be taken much more seriously than has sometimes been the case'; cf. Wirth (1978). Athanassiadi (1981) 192–3 also finds Lib. *Or.* 18.282 'revealing' of an expedition 'with civilizing pretensions ... conceived in terms of the heroic exploits of Alexander' (192 n. 4).



boys were selected by Alexander to be taught Greek and given Greek military training, and turned up at Susa as polished young recruits;<sup>172</sup> but whether the passage counts as evidence that Julian had actually marched to Persia with a vision of ‘Alexandrian’ conquest and cultural fusion in his mind is quite another question. There is an obvious objection: we are dealing with a posthumous panegyric, and quite likely only with a fantasy akin to the claim made elsewhere in the *Epitaphios* that Julian was all set to advance ‘to the Indian rivers’ until a god’s advice persuaded him to return home (*Or.* 18. 261 = **L6** above).<sup>173</sup> Moreover, there is explicit countervailing evidence in texts that Libanius himself composed in Julian’s lifetime, and in Ammianus: they make it quite clear that on 5 March 363—the day of his departure for Persia—Julian had announced he would be returning later that year to spend winter 363/4 at Tarsus rather than ungrateful Antioch, and had instructed the governor of Tarsus by letter to make all necessary preparations.<sup>174</sup> Unless one postulates an outright lie by Julian, then, the campaign was intended to last one season. That does not rule out the possibility of a future return to Persia, but it does entail that the campaign of 363 was not conceived as a venture that would keep Julian abroad for years and lead him ever-eastward to Hyrcania and India; it strongly commends the view that the practical objective was a punitive invasion that would culminate with a humiliated Shapur suing for peace on Roman terms—or maybe even with his removal, and the tame Hormisdas installed as Shah. The aim was perhaps always over-ambitious—but it was hardly the deluded dream of a would-be ‘New Alexander’.

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Julian invaded Persia in his early thirties, with a famous victory already credited to his name. It was entirely predictable that the ‘likeness to Alexander’ topos would be adduced by contemporaries at the time, just as it had been when his uncle Constantine and his nephew Constantius had prepared to go campaigning in the east; Libanius’ *Embassy* shows a well-placed orator adducing it on the assumption that Julian would relish it, and *Caesars* suggests that Julian himself exploited the theme’s potential. *Caesars* is perhaps not a public document, strictly speaking, but its deployment of Alexander as an emblem of martial virtue was quite likely echoed in details of Julian’s

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<sup>172</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 47.6; 71.1; Arr. *Anab.* 7.6.1; cf. 7.11.9 (the prayer at Opis for ‘harmony and community of rule between Macedonians and Persians’).

<sup>173</sup> The objection is foreseen, but not forestalled, by Seager (1997) 266.

<sup>174</sup> Amm. Marc. 23.2.5; Lib. *Or.* 1.132; cf. *Orr.* 15.55 and 77; 16.53–4.

public style, and in panegyric texts now lost to us, in the run-up to his expedition. Stylized *imitatio* and *comparatio* of that sort would be quite conventional, but some who wrote with hindsight implied that much more was at issue in Julian's case—private reverence of Alexander as a kindred spirit, and a driving wish to match his exploits. It suited admirers of Julian to remember him as a character truly cast in the 'Alexander mould'; it suited his detractors to represent him as one who had absurdly supposed that he was such. Both of these representations were highly fanciful; but the fact that Julian had expressed admiration for Alexander in his writings lends some of the later testimonies a specious plausibility. Some modern scholars of Julian have theorized that he did indeed succumb to a fantasizing self-identification with Alexander; but on a close reading of the evidence, the claim is unsustainable. It finds no support in any action or purpose reliably attested of Julian before or during the Persian campaign, and it is certainly not borne out by Julian's own testimony: it mistakes the expressions of admiration in his writings for unqualified adulation and unconscious self-identification, ignoring the significant reservations and level-headed criticisms that attended them. If Julian's case is unusual, it is principally because the survival of a substantial body of writings from his hand allows us to discuss his personal interest in Alexander at a level of detail that we could not begin to attempt for any other Roman emperor. It was an interest informed by eclectic reading on several fronts and seasoned by personal experience of soldiering in Gaul, and Julian's 'authentic voice' rings most clearly, perhaps, in the text he composed for his close friend and fellow-littérateur Salutius, while wintering out in Gaul in 358/9. Alexander's personal drive and achievements, the *Consolation* judges, were manifestly quite extraordinary, and only a niggling critic could fail to wonder at them—but there was a kind of imbalance or 'excess' in his nature that did lean at times to arrogance and ostentation, and sometimes to worse things, criminal things; on these counts, the *Consolation* readily acknowledges, there were certainly grounds for censure; but with the proviso that lesser souls (and its author counts himself among them) should hesitate before reproaching as great a man as Alexander. It is an indulgent verdict, but historically thoughtful in its way—and by no means unique to Julian: it was surely directly informed by his reading of the soldier-historian Arrian's verdict at the close of his *Anabasis* (7.29.1, 30.9). Arrian there judged Alexander a man of surpassing greatness—but a man, not a god, and not devoid of human faults; he occasionally slipped into excessive ostentation, and impetuosity and anger sometimes made him err; 'In my history of Alexander's doings there are accordingly actions I have censured—yet I am not ashamed to say I admire Alexander'. Like Arrian, Juli-

an counted himself a firm admirer. But firm admiration is not uncritical adulation, and it does not entail the delusive projection and emulation of a model.

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