The Greek and the Latin *Alexander Romance*: Comparative Readings

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1. Introduction

Our earliest surviving text of what we commonly call the *Alexander Romance* but was actually entitled *The Life (and Deeds) of Alexander of Macedon*, is a single manuscript of the 11th century (*Parisinus Graecus 1711*) known as A (Pseudo-Callisthenes). This text derives from a hypothetical original recension known as α and believed to be also the source of two early translations: a Latin one by Julius Valerius of about 300 AD and an Armenian translation dating to the 5th century AD. Recension β of the *Alexander Romance* derives mainly from α and is represented by several manuscripts. It probably dates to the 5th century AD and its chief witnesses are B (*Parisinus Graecus 1685*) of the 15th century and L (*Leidensis Vulcanianus 93*), also of the 15th century. Among other versions there is one termed δ*, which is no longer extant and was based either on A or on another version of the archetype α. The second Latin translation belongs to this recension and was made by Leo the Archpriest in the 10th century. Citations below are made from the texts of Kroll for A; Bergson for recension β, and Van Thiel for L; Rosellini for Julius Valerius and Pfister for Leo.

Comparison among the early recensions of the *Alexander Romance* is usually made on the basis of clear-cut differences in content. Differences in style or language are treated as separate issues and minor textual omissions

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1 Βίος Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Μακεδόνος (the title of L adds: καὶ πράξεις).
2 On occasion, however, the text of Julius Valerius shares material with recension β, as in the cases of the Centaurs and Lapiths simile (1.21) or the etymology of Lysias (1.22), which are discussed in section 4 below.
or changes remain almost exclusively the concern of the editor. What I mean is that little attention has been paid to the question of how these texts compare with each other as narratives. Let me make this point clear by referring to recension $\beta$. It is commonly noted that the text of recension $\beta$ is much easier to read (by that I do not mean ‘understand’) by comparison with A. It avoids complex syntactical structures, rare and poetic words, and has eliminated the embedded choliambic verses found in A. Also, the style tends to be repetitive and has a more popular flavor to it; words, names and passages that seemed obscure to the ‘author’ and would have meant little or nothing to his audience are submitted to a process of modification or elimination. But what does all this add up to? To put it plainly, do stylistic modifications or eliminations cause the story told by recension $\beta$ to differ in one or more respects from the narrative of A? Do changes in narrative structure change the way we read the story being told? Does ‘repetitive style’ entail or generate differences in meaning and what kind? Is the suppression, ‘corruption’ or substitution of obscure words devoid of significance for the story told?

If there are essentially no literary studies asking questions like those put forward above, this is probably because scholarship sees no literary qualities in the *Alexander Romance*. In the words of Richard Stoneman “The *Alexander Romance* is not a literary masterpiece. It is definitely popular literature”. The *Alexander Romance* may not be a ‘literary masterpiece’, but it deserves literary studies. First, because its versions may vary widely in terms of style and narrative features—suffice it to compare the Greek text of A or Valerius with the *Historia de preliis* and the prose and rhymed Modern Greek versions. And secondly, because texts that display a fragmented structure where narrative continuity plays little or no role may develop alternative strategies for producing narrative meaning.

Below I attempt to compare certain episodes in the Greek and Latin versions of the *Alexander Romance*. I argue that slight textual changes may affect the kind of story told and that these texts have ways to create textual or subtextual ‘coherence’ where there may be a mere parataxis of self-con-
tained stories or disconnected material or arbitrary geographical settings. Much attention is paid to the study of names (of places and people), which tend to adapt to changes in the historical and cultural context. I also investigate the ways in which a translation copes with the subtleties of the original, like wordplay, or creates new contextual meaning. A first point to be made on the basis of these comparative readings is that it is not always advisable to restore or correct passages of recension β by using material that comes from A or Valerius and vice versa. A second point is that a translation that looks faithful to the sense of the original may be telling a different story. A third point is that the *Alexander Romance* may on occasion display a degree of sophistication that should not, in my view, go unnoticed.

2. *The gates of Abdera*

Chapter 1.43 narrates Alexander’s negotiations with the beleaguered citizens of Abdera. It is preserved in Julius Valerius, recension β, the Syriac translation and the Latin translation of Leo the Archpriest. The basic story is told in Julius Valerius, our earliest account. As Alexander marches to Abdera, the Abderites close the city gates and Alexander orders the destruction of the city by fire. So they send an embassy explaining that their action is motivated not by hostility against him but by fear of Darius, and promise to open their gates when he returns victorious after defeating Darius. Alexander replies that they can open the city gates and live in peace for the present but when he returns he will no longer treat them as a friend [will make them his subjects, according to recension β].

Here are the texts of Julius Valerius, recension β and Leo:

\[\text{Igitur cum sibi per urbem Abderam transitus f\o{}ret, obseratis urbis suae}\]
\[\text{claustris Abderitae eum ne receiverent offirmaverant. id contumeliam}\]
\[\text{ratus et convenire protinus milites et urbem illam igni vastare mandavit.}\]
\[\text{sed legatione Abderitae docent sese illud non odio contemptuque Graeci}\]
\[\text{regis eiusque iustissimi factitare, enim metuere impetum barbarorum}\]
\[\text{motusque Darii inconsultiores; cui si potestatis aliquid in sese relictum}\]
\[\text{foret, non absque poena Abderitum fore quod Alexandrum in amicitiam}\]
\[\text{contra Persae commoda receptassent: “igitur reverso tibi,” aiunt, “et}\]
\[\text{victori parebimus.” ad haec rex illum quem conceperint de Dario metum}\]
\[\text{abicere supplices iubet neque ulterius eius vim atque impotentiam formi-}\]
\[\text{dare. nunc tamen se velle respondit urbem quam confidentissime rese-}\]
When Alexander was passing by the city of Abdera, the Abderites closed the gates of their city determined not to receive him within it. He interpreted it as an insult and ordered the soldiers to gather and destroy the city by fire. But the Abderites sent an embassy and explained that they were not doing it because they hated and despised a most just king like him but because they feared a barbarian attack and Darius’ rather unpredictable movements. They added that if Darius had still some power over them, they should not be punished for having received Alexander against the interests of the Persian King: “Therefore” they said “we will submit to you when you return victorious”. The king ordered the suppliants to let go their fear of Darius and to stop dreading his force and violence. He added that he wanted them to open their city in absolute trust and that this time he would not enter. “But when I come back” he said “I will no longer be a guest and a friend to you.”

(Valerius 1.43 Rosellini)

'Ελθὼν δὲ ἐκεῖθεν εἰς τὴν Πύλην καὶ συνάξας τὴν Μακεδόνων στρατείαν σὺν οἷς αἰχµαλώτευσεν ἐν τῷ πολέµῳ Δαρείου, τὴν ὄδοιποριὰν ἐποιεῖτο εἰς Ἀβδηρίαν. οἱ δὲ Ἀβδηρῖται ἀπέκλεισαν τὰς πύλας τῆς πόλεως αὐτῶν· ὅ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος ἐπὶ τοῦτο ὑγισθεὶς ἐκέλευσε τῷ στρατηγῷ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν. οἱ δὲ πέπουσιν αὐτὸ πρέσβεις λέγοντες· "Ἡμεῖς ἀπεκλείσαμεν τὰς πύλας οὐχ ὡς ἀντιτασσόμενοι τῷ κράτει τῷ σῷ, ἀλλὰ δεδοικότες τὴν τῶν Περσῶν βασιλείαν, μήπως Δαρείος ἐπισήμνησῃ τῇ τυραννίδι πορθῆσῃ ἡ ὦν τὴν πόλιν ώς παραδεξάμενοι σε. ὡστε σὺ <νενικήκως Δαρείον> παρελθὼν ἄνοιξαν τὴς πόλεως τὰς πύλας τῷ γὰρ ἱσχυρότερῳ βασιλείᾳ ὑποτασσόμεθα." Ταῦτα ἀκούσας Ἀλέξανδρος ἐμειδίασεν καὶ ἀπεὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀποσταλέντας παρ' αὐτῶν πρέσβεις· "Δεδοίκατε τῇ Δαρείου βασιλείᾳ, μήπως ὕστερον ὡς ἐκπρόθηση ἐπιµένων τῇ βασιλείᾳ; παρεῖσθε καὶ ἄνοιξατε καὶ κοσµίως πολίτευσθε· οὐ γὰρ εἰσελεύσομαι εἰς τὴν πόλιν ύμῶν, ἐως ἠττήσω Δαρείον ὃν δεδοίκατε βασιλέα· καὶ τότε ὡς ὑποχειρίους λήψομαι." Καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν τοῖς πρέσβεισι τὴν ὄδοιποριὰν ἐαυτὸ ἐποιεῖτο. (L 1.43 Van Thiel)

(From there he went to Pyle. Here he gathered together the Macedonian army and the prisoners he had taken in the war against Darius and marched to Abdera. The Abderites closed the gates of their city. Alexander was angry at this and ordered his general to burn down the city. But the Abderites sent an embassy to him who gave this message: “We closed our gates not in order to oppose your rule but because we are
afraid of the kingdom of Persia, that Darius, if he remains in power, may sack our city because we received you. Therefore <go and defeat Darius and then> come and open our gates. We obey the stronger king. Having heard their speech Alexander smiled and said to the envoys of the Abderites: “Are you afraid of Darius’ rule, that he may come and sack your city should he remain in power? Go now and open your gates and behave as usual. I will not enter your city, until I have defeated King Darius whom you dread; then I will make you my subjects.” Having said these words to the embassy, Alexander resumed his march.)

The Latin text of Valerius in its typical learned fashion attempts to make the situation as clear as possible by explaining the arguments on both sides in indirect speech. By comparison with Valerius who repeats ideas the text of recension β repeats words (as in δεδοικότες, δεδοίκατε, δεδοίκατε). The invitation extended to Alexander: “come and open our gates” (παρελθὼν ἄνοιξον τῆς πόλεως τὰς πύλας) is a feature that may be telling a different story from Valerius’ “reverso tibi ... et victori parebimus”. The Abderites do
not utter the word “when you return”; also they voice their submission to ‘the stronger king’ in the present tense (ὑποτασσόµεθα) and they may actually be saying: “we submit to you who are the stronger king”). Hence Merkelbach’s supplement νενικηκώς Δαρείον (“having defeated Darius”), which was proposed on the basis of the story told by Valerius and was accepted by Van Thiel, is questionable.

The call extended to Alexander to come and open the gates may simply be a case where the Abderites, having expressed their fear of Darius and weighed the alternatives, are inviting the Macedonian leader to enter their city immediately, while Alexander construes their statement as a challenge—or it may be that Alexander’s reply has not adapted to changes in the speech of the Abderites. It is a typical feature of recension β to display changes (vis-à-vis the text of A) in one part of the story through minor omissions or modifications while other parts in the same story remain the same. The ironic gap is produced of itself, i.e. out of the text we end up with. The least we can say is that this type of confrontation between Alexander and the Abderites could be an open-ended game as to the time of its fulfillment. Leo’s translation makes this point clear. It offers the narrative of recension β reduced to its bare essentials and organized around portas. The citizens of Abdera voice their fear of Darius; Alexander invites them to open their gates uttering a concealed threat about “having a talk with them” in the future; the Abderites are frightened and “throw the gates open” for the Macedonian leader to enter their city (Timendo acquieverunt et patefecerunt portas). The outcome of the confrontation in Leo’s text supports in retrospect our cautious reading of the text of recension β.

One final point that deserves our attention in recension β is the beginning of chapter 1.43. The narrative opens with Alexander’s arrival at a city called Πύλη that is not mentioned in Julius Valerius. C. Müller suggested changing Πύλην to Ἀµφίπολιν and Ausfeld to Πέλλαν;9 Arrian’s text suggests that Πύλην probably originated in Ἀµφίπολιν:

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7 Merkelbach 1977, 120.
8 In his critical apparatus Kroll displays caution as to whether the Greek text should be supplemented on the basis of Valerius’ Latin text (fuitne olim: post victoriam portas aperi? cf. Val.). He also cites a suggested emendation of παρελθών to ἐπανελθών.
9 See Bergson’s critical apparatus, ad loc. Two manuscripts read πόλιν.
παρήμειβε τὸ Πάγγαιον ὄρος τήν ὡς ἐπ’ Ἄβδηρα καὶ Μαρώνειαν, πόλεις Ἑλληνίδας ἐπὶ θαλάσση φκισμένας. (Arrian, Anab. 1.11.3–4)
(His route was past lake Cercinitis towards Amphipolis and the delta of the river Strymon. Having crossed the Strymon he passed Mount Pan-gaeum on the way to Abdera and Maronea, Greek cities settled by the sea.)

In a narrative like the *Alexander Romance* strategy and military movements have limited importance and toponyms may bear little or no topographical or geographical significance. Hence, tracing the origin of the fictional toponym Πύλην is one question, but a more important one is to understand that this place name belongs with the semantic cluster of πύλη in the story told immediately next. A key feature in the Abdera narrative of recension β is the creation of a semantic texture around the gates of the city (πύλας), their closing and (expected) opening. Πύλην becomes absorbed into the main body of the narrative and consequently signals in advance the pivotal place of the gates of Abdera in the confrontation between Alexander and the Abderites.

### 3. The coordinates of a fictional march

Just as the fictional city Πύλη in chapter 1.43 anticipates the role of the gates of Abdera in the story told next, so Alexander’s letter to the fictional general Scamander at the beginning of the previous chapter (1.42) anticipates, both in the text of A and in recension β, Alexander’s visit to Troy and his view of (leap into) the river Scamander. Here are the texts of A, recension β and Valerius for chapter 1.42.4–13:

Αὐτὸς δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος ἀναλαβὼν ἢν εἶχε δύναμιν ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὴν Ἀχαίαν καὶ παραγενόμενος ἐκεῖ πόλας πόλεις ὑπέταξε, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν στρατιῶν συλλέξας μυριάδων ἤζερ καὶ ὑπερπεράσας τὸν καλὸν ἔθνον Ταῦρον καταπήξας δόρυ ἑγίστη εἰς τὴν γῆν εἶπεν: “Εἴ τις σθεναρὸς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἢ τῶν βαρβάρων ἢ τῶν ἄλλων βασιλέων βαστάσει τοῦτο τὸ δόρυ, ἑαυτῷ χαλεπὸν σημεῖον ἔξει· ἡ γὰρ πόλις αὐτοῦ ἐκ βάθρων βασταχθήσεται.” Παραγίνεται οὖν εἰς τὴν Πιερίαν πόλιν τῆς Βεβρυκίας, ἔνθα ἦν ναὸς καὶ ἄγαλμα τοῦ Ὀρφέως καὶ αἱ Πιερίδες Μοῦσαι καὶ τὰ θηρία αὐτῶν παρεστῶτα. βλέποντος δὲ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου εἰς τὸ ἅγαλμα τοῦ Ὀρφέως ἱδρύσει τὸ ἄγαλμα τοῦ Ὀρφέως ἱδρύσας τὸ ἐξαναλύειν ἐν τῷ προσώπῳ καὶ ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ σώματι. τοῦ δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου ζητοῦντος, τί βούλεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦτο, λέγει αὐτῷ.
Alexander also took the forces he had with him and marched ahead to Achaia and when he arrived there he subdued many cities. From there he gathered an army of 170,000 men and, after crossing the mountain called Taurus, he thrust a most heavy spear into the ground and said: “If any strong man, Greek or barbarian, or any of the other kings, pulls out this spear, it will be an evil omen for him: his city will be razed to the ground.”

Then he came to Pieria, a city in Bebrycia, where there was a temple and a statue of Orpheus and the Pierian Muses, and near the statue stood wild beasts. When Alexander looked at the statue of Orpheus, the face and the whole body of the wooden image perspired. Alexander asked about the meaning of the omen and the seer Melampus told him: “King Alexander, you will have to labor with toil and sweat, subduing the nations of the barbarians and the cities of the Greeks and marching through packs of wild beasts, just as Orpheus by means of his lyre-playing and singing won over the Greeks, turned the barbarians to love through sweet words and tamed the wild beasts.” Having heard these words Alexander honored greatly the seer. Then he came to Phrygia and entered the city of Ilion itself and offered sacrifices to Hector and Achilles and to the other heroes. … And having seen that the river Scamander, into which Achilles had leapt, was hardly five cubits wide, and that the seven-layered shield of Ajax was not as large and wonderful as Homer had written, he
said: “Fortunate are you who found a herald as great as Homer; you be-
came great thanks to his poetry but in reality you are not worthy of what
he wrote about you.” Then a poet approached him and said: “King Alex-
ander, we will write [of your deeds] better than Homer.” And Alexander
said to him: “I would rather be a Thersites in Homer than Achilles in
your poem.”

… ipse una exercitu Achaia peragrata multisque praeterea civitatibus
receptis aut quaesitis etiam centum et septuaginta milia collegit armato-
rum Taurumque transducit. tumque summo in culmine Tauri montis
hasta defixa dixisse fertur, quisque illam rex milesve Graecus aut barba-
rus humo evellere ausus foret, edictum sibi urbis ac patriae suae
su[is]que excidium meminisset. Ipse tamen ad civitatem Pieriam, quae
Bebryciae urbis habetur, iter exim facit; qua in urbe et templum opi-
rum et simulacrum Orphei erat admodum religiosum. ibidem Musae
etiam Pierides consecratae videbantur unaque omnium fitenta
viventium Orphei musicam demirantia. cum igitur admirationis studio
simulacrum illud Alexander intueretur, sudor repente profluere et per
omne simulacri illius corpus manare visus non sine admiratione viden-
tium fuit. motus ergo portenti novitate coniectatorem vel celebratis-
simum Melampoda sciscitatur quid tandem ille sudor sibi simulacri
minaretur. tum ille: “sudor sane largus laborque,” ait, “quam prolixus
tibi quoque in his rebus praesentibus, o rex, erit; quippe et gentium per-
agratio et operum difficultates tete manent, quod illi quoque Orphei fuit,
qui peragrans urbes Graecas ac barbaras ad favorem sui animos ad-
mirantium flexerit.” hisce auditis Alexander honore quam largo Melam-
poda munerator. eximque in Phrygiam venit atque illic Hectora Achil-
lenque unaque alios heros divum honore participat. praecipue tamen
Achillen veneratur ac rogat uti sibi et ipse faveat et dona quae ferret
dignanter admittat; haec enim a sese non ut ab externo ac superstitoso,
verum ut consanguineo ac religioso dedicari ... Haec precatus in istum
Alexander modum ibidem flumen Scamandrum cum videret clipeumque
Achilli templo Hercules consecratum, nec alvei illius latitudinem demira-
tus nec magnificentiam clipei pondusve famosum, “o te beatum
Achillem,” fertur saepe dixisse, qui Homero praedicatore celebraris!”
his auditis ab eodem cum multi admodum litterati studio eius erga ami-
cos religioneve tracti iter eius prosequerentur parique sese stilo opera
sua prosecutores esse promitterent, optasse se dixit vel Thersiten apud
Alexander himself traversed Achaia, received or won many cities and mastered another 170,000 troops which he led over Mt Taurus. It is reported that he fixed his spear on the highest peak of Mt Taurus and said that, if any soldier or king, Greek or barbarian, dared to pull it out of the ground, he would be sure to expect destruction on his city, his country and his people. Next Alexander marched to Pieria, which is considered a city of Bebrycia. There was in that city a splendid temple and a venerable statue of Orpheus; and one could also see statues of the Pierian Muses and images of all kinds of animals listening with admiration to Orpheus’ music. As Alexander was gazing with admiration at this statue, suddenly abundant sweat was seen to ooze from the all parts of the body of the statue, which provoked the admiration of the bystanders. Intrigued by the uncanny omen Alexander inquired of Melampus, a most famous soothsayer, what kind of threat against him the sweating statue portended. “You will sweat a lot and labor greatly” he said “in the undertakings that are ahead you; the traversing of nations and difficult operations await you, as Orpheus did, who journeyed through Greek and barbarian cities and won the admiration and favor of their people.” When Alexander heard the prediction, he bestowed great honors upon Melampus. Then he came to Phrygia where he imparted divine honors to Hector, Achilles and other heroes. He paid special tribute to Achilles asking for his favor and that he might graciously receive his offerings: he was not giving them as a superstitious outsider but as a pious relative …Having concluded his prayer Alexander saw the river Scamander in the same location and the shield of Achilles that was dedicated to the temple of Heracles; he did not admire either the width of the river-bed or the splendor and famous weight of the shield, and is reported to have said this: “Fortunate are you, Achilles, for having been celebrated by a herald like Homer.” When the many learned men who accompanied him, attracted by the favor he displayed towards his friends or the admiration they felt towards him, heard these words, they promised they would record his feats in a manner worthy of Homer; but Alexander replied he wished he would rather be a Thersites in Homer than be regarded as an Achilles by this sort of writer.”

Καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος ἁναλαβὼν ἔμελεν ἐὰν δύναμιν τὴν ὁδοπορίαν ἐποιεῖτο. καὶ ὑπερπεράσας τὸν καλούμενον Ταῦρον κατατήξας δόρυ
Alexander also took the forces he had with him and marched ahead. After crossing the mountain called Taurus, he thrust a most heavy spear into the ground and said: “If any strong man, Greek or barbarian, or any of the other kings, pulls out this spear, it will be an evil omen for him: his city will be razed to the ground.” Then he came to Hipperia, a city in Bebrycia, where there was a temple and a statue of Orpheus and the Pierian Muses, and near the statue stood (carved images) of wild beasts. When Alexander looked at the statue of Orpheus, the wooden image perspired from top to bottom. Alexander asked about the meaning of the omen and the seer Melampus told him: “King Alexander, you will have to labor with toil and sweat, in order to subdue the nations of the barbarians and the cities of the Greeks. Just as Orpheus by means of his lyre-playing and singing won over the Greeks, put the barbarians to flight and tamed the wild beasts, so you by the labor of your spear will place all men under your dominion.” Having heard these words Alexander honored the seer greatly and dismissed him. Then he advanced to Phrygia.
and came to the river Scamander, into which Achilles had leapt, and he leapt in also. When Alexander saw that the seven-layered [shield of Ajax] was not as large and wonderful as Homer had written, he said: “Fortunate are you who found a herald as great as Homer: you became great thanks to his poetry, but in reality you are not worthy of what he wrote about you.” Then a poet approached him and said: “King Alexander, we will write of your deeds better than Homer.” But Alexander said to him: “I would rather be a Thersites in Homer than Agamemnon in your poem.”

a. The historiographical background

In the text of A after the battle of Issos (chapter 1.41) Alexander marches backwards towards Troy and Macedonia and ends up dealing with Greek uprisings (Thebes, Athens and Sparta). In historiographical accounts Alexander deals with the affairs of Greece when he first becomes king; there follows the march through Thrace, the crossing of the Hellespont and the visit to Troy. The text of recension β narrates Alexander’s backward march till the destruction of Thebes (chapters 1.42–46), leaving out the long debate in Athens and negotiations with the Spartans, which in the text of A take up chapters 1–6 of Book 2. Recension β, however, includes also a brief account of Alexander’s campaigns against the northern tribes immediately after his accession, the destruction of Thebes—which is narrated again in chapter 1.46—the crossing of the Hellespont and the battle of Granicus (chapters 1.26–28, not found in A).10

In both A and recension β Chapter 1.42 begins with the letters Darius sends to his subject nations after the battle of Issos in order to assemble a greater army and Alexander’s letter to general Scamander11 to join him with his forces. Next it mentions the crossing of the Taurus mountain range (an event which in historiographical accounts precedes the battle of Issos) and the thrusting of a spear into the ground (an event that occurred when Alexander first crossed into Asia); it describes his visit to Pieria and the omen of Orpheus’ statue (which occurred before the beginning of the campaign); and it concludes with Alexander’s visit to Troy which took place directly after

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11 He has been identified with Cassander or Amyntas (Bergson, ad loc.), but the identification remains uncertain.
his crossing into Asia. As pointed out above, the events of the chapter are bracketed by Alexander’s letter to the general by the fictional name ‘Scamander’ and Alexander’s view of [leap into] the river ‘Scamander’ in the Troad.

(When he reached the Hellespont he leapt off the ship from Europe on to Asia. And having fixed his spear in the ground he said that he had won Asia with it.)

(Alexander marched with his army to the Hellespont and transported it from Europe to Asia. He personally sailed with sixty fighting ships to the Troad. First of the Macedonians he flung his spear from the ship and fixed it in the ground, and then leapt ashore himself, signifying that he received Asia from the gods as a spear-won prize. He visited and honored the tombs of the heroes Achilles and Ajax …)

(According to most accounts Alexander sailed from Elaeus to the Achaean harbor and during the crossing he steered the flag-ship himself; and when he reached the middle of the Hellespont he sacrificed a bull to Poseidon and the Nereids, pouring into the sea a drink offering from a golden bowl.)
Chapter 1.28 of recension β narrates Alexander’s crossing of the Hellespont in its original chronological order. In this narrative the Macedonian hero “jumped off the ship from Europe to Asia\footnote{I follow the text of Bergson’s edition, which is preferable to the text of L in Van Thiel.} and then thrust his spear into the ground claiming Asia as won by his spear”. The narrative proceeds with the battle of Granicus. Diodorus’ account of the crossing quoted above tells the same story in a very similar language and thus sheds light on the original position of the passages composing chapter 1.42 of the *Alexander Romance*. As already noted by Ausfeld,\footnote{Ausfeld 1907, 147–148.} chapter 1.42 (in both recensions) contains remnants of Alexander’s crossing from Europe to Asia. According to Ausfeld the region of ‘Achaia’, mentioned in A, the Armenian translation, Valerius and Leo, would be the ἁχαιῶν λιμήν, the harbor where in Arrian’s account Alexander landed when he crossed from Europe to Asia. Therefore, the thrusting of the spear into the ground and the visit to Troy, given separately in chapter 1.42, originally belonged together. The original crossing of the Taurus range is mentioned in chapter 1.41 but Ausfeld believed that the fictional crossing in 1.42 echoed the sacrifice of a bull (ταῦρον) to Poseidon during the crossing of the Hellespont (Arrian 1.11.6–7, quoted above). We will discuss this point in subsection 3c below. We have no clue as to how the account of the omen of Pieria was interpolated between the spear-thrusting scene and the visit to Troy.

b. **Thematic unity and narrative versions**

We must always assume that the narrative of the *Alexander Romance* passed through various stages before reaching the earliest form we possess, the text of A. As it stands, the text of A 1.42 presents some kind of thematic unity for what looks like an accidental compilation of unrelated passages. The section beginning after the letters of Darius and Alexander brings together gestures, predictions and signs pertaining to the magnitude of Alexander’s conquests and rule. Specifically, after the crossing of Mt Taurus a threat is launched by Alexander against those Greeks and barbarians who dare to challenge him by pulling out his spear from the ground. In Pieria the seer Melampus predicts the struggle of Alexander-Orpheus to subdue all barbarian and Greek nations. And at Troy Alexander enters into rivalry with Homer’s heroes and utters an ironic *makarismos* implying that his achievements are or will be infinitely greater than theirs. If, as we believe, the fictional crossing of Mt
Taurus can be envisaged as a portentous event, then it would belong with the above-mentioned sequence of signs.

But the texts of the two Greek recensions and the two Latin translations present notable differences as to the kind of story told. In recension β the thematic unity described above becomes tighter by comparison with A and Valerius. Textual changes in the same recension end up creating subtextual semantic associations.

In what follows we will discuss differences in the various recensions, first as regards the thematic organization of chapter 1.43 (this subsection) and next its semantic subtext (subsections 3c and 3d).

The omen of Pieria

Having conducted these operations Alexander returned to Macedonia. There he offered to Olympian Zeus the sacrifice established by Archelaus and celebrated the Olympian games at Aegae; others say that he held games in honor of the Muses. In the course of these events it was reported to him that in Pieria the statue of Orpheus, son of Oeagrus the Thracian, had sweated continuously. The seers offered various interpretations of the omen, but Aristandros of Telmissus, encouraged Alexander: in his view it meant that epic and lyric poets and writers of odes would labor much in their effort to compose poetry and songs in honor of Alexander and his feats.)

In Arrian the miraculous event occurs in Pieria and is reported to Alexander while he is celebrating a musical contest to honor the Muses in Aigai, the capital of his kingdom. Alexander is informed that Orpheus’ statue kept oozing sweat; in interpreting the omen Alexander’s seer Aristandros explains that epic and lyric poets will put much labor in narrating his deeds. The text

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14 See also Plut. Alex. 14.8.
of A has moved Pieria to Bebrycia in Asia Minor and has placed the sweating statue inside a temple, surrounded by the Muses—who were of course at home in Greek Pieria but not in Bebrycia—and by wild beasts. Also the event is witnessed by Alexander himself. As he is gazing at the statue it starts sweating all over. The omen is interpreted by the mythical seer Melampus. The seer does not see a connection with the πόνος of poets to narrate and extol Alexander’s campaigns, as in Arrian, but with the πόνος involved in Alexander’s own campaigns. Specifically, he draws a parallel between Alexander’s laboring toil and sweat to subdue barbarian nations and Greek cities while marching among wild beasts, and the enchanting power of Orpheus’ music and song in winning over the Greeks, in turning the barbarians to love through sweet words and in taming wild beasts.

The Latin text of Valerius privileges the enchanting power of Orpheus’ music that wins universal ‘admiration’ and the favor of Greeks and barbarians (‘admiration’ is a key word in Valerius’ text: demirantia, admirationis studio, non sine admiratione, admirantium). There is much sweat and labor in Orpheus’ and Alexander’s course but every trace or potential of violence has disappeared: the submission of nations to force has been transformed into ‘admiration’ for Alexander-Orpheus; the wild beasts in the temple have become ‘images of all kinds of animals’ (omnigenum figmenta viventium)\(^\text{15}\) and the wild beasts mentioned in connection with Alexander and Orpheus have been eliminated.

Relatively minor changes in recension β created a text that tells a slightly different story. In contrast to Valerius the text emphasizes violence: it omits the complement of ἔτρεψεν and thus makes Orpheus “put the barbarians to flight” instead of “turning the barbarians to love through sweet words”; and it adds the means of the spear in the achievement by Alexander of world domination: “you will make all men your subjects by the labor of your spear”. Thus the spear (δόρατι) becomes the explicit equivalent of Orpheus’ lyre playing and singing (λυρίζων καὶ ᾄδων). The spear appears to have intruded into the seer’s prediction from the previous spear-thrusting scene. The omission of the complement of ἔτρεψεν and the addition of the spear are in harmony with Alexander’s threat, in the previous scene, of devastating violence to whoever dares challenge him by pulling out his spear from the ground.

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\(^{15}\) The θηρία in the A may also be artistic representations but the text does not mention it. Most manuscripts of recension β qualify them as ξόανα (‘wooden images’) but the word is missing in L (see Bergson’s critical apparatus). Like ‘Mt Taurus’ the beasts in the Orpheus scene vacillate between fantasy and reality.
Alexander at Troy

In the text of A Alexander is disappointed by the five-cubit width of the river Scamander and the actual dimensions of Ajax’s seven-layered shield and exclaims that the heroes [of the Trojan war] were fortunate to have been celebrated by Homer: they owe their greatness to his poetry because in reality they were not worthy of what was written about them. In Arrian’s well-known second prologue to the narrative of Alexander’s campaigns (1.12.1–4) Alexander accounts Achilles fortunate for having had his deeds sung by Homer and the historian argues that Alexander’s deeds are less known than much less significant accomplishments but he does not downplay the greatness of Homer’s heroes. Alexander’s status is here greatly enhanced by comparison with historiographical accounts, where as a rule he pays tribute to his hero and ancestor Achilles. The representation, in the previous passage, of Alexander as a new Orpheus possessing universal superhuman powers undoubtedly contributes to the attitude of superiority Alexander assumes vis-à-vis the heroes of the Trojan War.

Valerius’ expanded narrative of Alexander’s visit to Troy is significantly different. It mentions Hector and “other heroes” but focuses exclusively on Achilles. Alexander pays special tribute to Achilles, makes him offerings and sings a verse prayer expounding the line of descent from him and asking for his favor in his plans to become a kosmokrator. Also the shield of Ajax is replaced by the shield of Achilles (here dedicated to the temple of Heracles, another ancestor of his) and Alexander’s makarismos concerns specifically Achilles. The passage avoids absurd points (like the five-cubit width of Scamander) and concentrates on Alexander’s ties and rivalry with Achilles. In spirit it stands closer to historiographical and biographical accounts, where Alexander’s rivalry with and emulation of Achilles is a common feature. By contrast in the Alexander Romance the presence of Achilles is restricted to the Troy episode and even there in the early Greek recensions16 his role as model for Alexander is downplayed.17

In recension β the visit to Troy contains only one mention of Achilles (as opposed to three in A) and no sacrifices to the hero (as in A); a significant development is the substitution of Agamemnon for Achilles in Alexander’s

16 For similarities with Valerius cf. the account of recension ε (14.6 Trumpf).
17 The limited importance of Achilles in the Alexander Romance would not, therefore, support Centanni’s argument (1988, XXVI–XXVII) concerning the ‘double’ destruction of Thebes. According to her the second case (chapter 1.46) would allude to the destruction by Achilles of Thebe Hypoploka. On Alexander as a model for Achilles outside the Alexander Romance see Ameling 1988; Cohen 1995; Flower 2000.
reply to the anonymous poet. There is rivalry with Achilles but it assumes a physical aspect: Alexander leaps into the waters of the river Scamander, probably in imitation of Achilles’ fight with the formidable river-god in *Iliad* 21. This striking detail does not appear in any other version of the *Alexander Romance* and fits in with the emphasis in recension β on the physical as opposed to the intellectual side of the hero (compare the Orpheus scene). Of Ajax’s shield only the epithet ἑπταβοειον (‘having seven folds of bull’s hide’) survived in recension β. Thus, by comparison with A and Valerius, the motivation for the makarisnos of Homeric is shaky, even non-existent: the view of Scamander (cf. θεασάµενος in A; cum videret in Valerius) is replaced by the action of leaping into the river; and the view of Ajax’s shield is replaced by the view of something called τὸ ἑπταβοειον.

c. From Mt Taurus to the seven-layered shield of Ajax

The noun τὸ ἑπταβοειον may have survived by accident in recension β, but its preservation obliges us to consider its significance in a broader context. It is now time to take a look at the subtextual semantic unity of chapter 1.42, of which we spoke above. In the text of A the section of 1.42 we have been discussing is bracketed by the notion of ‘bull’ and accompanying notion (implied or expressed) of something extraordinary: Alexander crossing Mt ‘Taurus’, a homonym of ταῦρος, ‘bull’, and Alexander sighting the shield of Ajax with its ‘seven folds of bull’s hide’ (τὸ σάκος Αἴαντος τὸ ἑπταβοειον).

From this perspective, the reader should not, in my view, fail to notice neither the preservation of τὸ ἑπταβοειον in recension β nor the fact that the text no longer applies the description μέγα καὶ θαυµαστόν, attributed to Homer, to Ajax’s shield but to ‘bull hides’. The reader should also consider the extraordinary presence of animals in the interpolated Orpheus scene: the statue of Orpheus surrounded by wild beasts and Alexander-Orpheus enchanting and taming beasts with his music. We will next discuss the semantics of Mt Taurus and the corruption of Pieria into Hiperia in recension β.

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18 Centanni 1988, XXVI gives a questionable reading of the passage: “Come Achille, Alessandro si bagna nello Scamandro e per quel bagno rischia la vita”.
19 Actually it is a restoration of the text: four manuscripts, among them L, read ἑπταβοειον, which may have arisen from ἑπτάβοιον, a variant of ἑπταβοειον, found at Soph. *Aj*. 576; B reads ἑπτάβοιον (‘seven mountains’ or something similar) and F reads πήδηµα, which means ‘leap’ and pursues the image of Alexander leaping into Scamander.
The crossing of Mt Taurus

There is evidence suggesting that the crossing of Mt Taurus substituted for the crossing of the Hellespont. As Diodorus 17.17.1–3 shows, in historiographical accounts the crossing of the Hellespont formed a pair with the thrusting of the spear. The crossing of Mt Taurus in chapter 1.42 (of both recensions) is fictional and is rendered through the intriguing participle υπερπεράσας, a dis legomenon. By contrast, in the original crossing of the same mountain, which occurred before the battle of Issos and is narrated in the immediately preceding chapter of recension β, the verb used is διοδέσας (‘passing through’) and the mountain is qualified with the epithet ‘Cilician’: the language leaves no doubt that this is a ‘real’ crossing concerning a ‘real’ mountain. The verb περάω is commonly employed of traversing water space and in the Alexander Romance the case is always so—except for chapter 1.42. Ausfeld suggested that the present passage may echo Alexander’s crossing of the Hellespont (cf. Plut. Alex. 15.7 τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον διεπέρασεν), in the course of which, according to Arrian, he sacrificed a bull to Poseidon and the Nereids (1.11.6 ἐπειδὴ κατὰ µέσον τῶν πόρων τοῦ Ἑλλησπόντου ἐγένετο, σφάξαντα ταῦρον τῷ Ποσειδῶνι καὶ Νηρηίσι). Ausfeld assumed that υπερπεράσας Ταῦρον (in recension γ it became περάσας Ταῦρον) arose out of a hypothetical εἰς Ἀσίαν περᾶσαι Ταῦρον σφάττοντα or something similar. The Armenian translation provides an intriguing account of the crossing of Mt Taurus: “when he [Alexander] was near the Keraton called Tauros”. The modern translator reports Dashian’s suggestion that “the Armenian might have had a Greek word such as κεράτιον to translate and rendered it as a proper name”. Whatever may be the case, “horn” and “bull” go together and it is again possible that a real bull was originally mentioned or that the ancient translator chose to suggest an association of ‘Mt Taurus’ with ταῦρος, ‘bull’. In Valerius’ version Alexander thrusts his spear into the ground while at the highest peak of this mountain: summo in culmine Tauri montis hasta defixa. The learned reader may recall at this point that Catullus 64.105–111 evokes the meaning ‘bull’ in Mt Taurus: an oak tree is uprooted and falls summo ... in Tauro, portraying the collapse of the monstrous Minotaurus. The Catullan passage is bracketed by Taurus (105) and cornua (111). Furthermore Seneca in his Phaedra cleverly inserts

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20 In addition to Diodorus quoted above see also Just. 11.5.6–12.
21 Ausfeld 1907, 147–148.
22 Wolohojian 1969, 66, 171; Traina 2003, 84.
Mt Taurus into the semantic texture of the play and the pervasive bull theme.\textsuperscript{23}

\textit{Hipperia in Bebrycia}

In recension β Alexander after crossing Mt Taurus comes to Ἰππερία, a city in Bebrycia (πόλιν τῆς Βεβρυκίας). The city of Πιερία was at some stage corrupted to Ἰππερίαν. The toponym evokes ἵππος (‘horse’) and actually two of the manuscripts read Ἱππορίαν. There is indeed a word that sounds the same and is derived from ἵππος: Aristophanes (Nub. 74) coined the word ἵππερος (with a pun on ἔρως) to indicate ‘horse-love’ (τὸν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἵπποις ἔρωτα). The fictional toponym is etymologically at home with the ‘beasts’ in the Orpheus section and in the region of Βεβρυκία, a place name in antiquity etymologized from βρυχάομαι (‘roar’ of lions, ‘bellow’ of bulls).\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{The taming of Bucephalus}

But what does the identification of this semantic subtext point to? We have already noted that the presence of animals in chapter 1.42 is accompanied with the implicit notion of something wondrous and explicitly associated with Alexander-Orpheus as enchanter and tamer of beasts. In this respect I would like to draw attention to a passage in the \textit{Alexander Romance} that ‘thematises’ semantic components of the present narrative. Here is the text of recension β, which does not differ substantially from A:

\begin{quote}
Επανελθὼν δὲ Φίλιππος ἀπὸ τῆς ἀποδήμιας ἐξῆλθεν εἰς Δελφοὺς χρησιμοδοτηθήναι τίς ἁρα μετ’ αὐτὸν βασιλεύσει. ἢ δὲ ἐν Δελφοῖς Πυθία γευσάμενη τοῦ Κασταλίου νάματος διὰ χθόνιον χρησμοῦ οὕτως εἶπεν· “Φίλιππε, ἔκεινος ὅλης τῆς οἰκουμένης βασιλεύσει καὶ δόρατο πάντας ὑποτάξει, ὡς τὸν Βουκέφαλον ἵππον ἀλλόμενον διὰ μέσης τῆς Πέλλης διοδεύσει.” ἐκλήθη δὲ Βουκέφαλος, ἐπείδη ἐν τῷ μηρῷ εἶχεν ἐγκαυμα βοῦς φαίνοντα κεφαλήν. ὁ δὲ Φίλιππος ἀκούσας τὸν χρῆσμὸν προσέδόκα νέον Ἡρακλῆν. (recension β 1.15 Bergson)
\end{quote}

(When Philip returned he went to Delphi to inquire of the oracle who would rule Macedonia after him. The Delphic Pythia, having drunk from the water of the Castalian spring, gave the following chthonic response:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{23} On Catullus and Seneca see Paschalis 1994, 111–115.
\textsuperscript{24} Paschalis 1997, 192 with literature. Another etymology was from βρύχω (‘devour’; ‘gnash’ or ‘grind’ the teeth).
“Philip, the person to rule the whole world and conquer all nations by his spear is the one who will ride Bucephalus through the middle of the city of Pella.” The horse was called Bucephalus because he had on his haunch a mark shaped like an ox’s head. When Philip heard the oracle he began to expect a new Heracles.

When Philip inquired of the Delphic oracle who would succeed him to the throne of Macedonia the prophetess predicted that whoever tamed Bucephalus and rode through the middle of Pella would rule the world and subjugate all nations with his spear (δύνατα). The response led Philip to expect a new Heracles. Alexander’s first and highly prominent feat is the taming of the man-eating Bucephalus (τὸν Βοοκέφαλον ἵππον). The text itself provides the etymology of its name: it is a horse that “bears a mark on its haunch shaped like an ox’s head” (ἔγκαυμα βόδες φαίνοντα κεφαλήν). Chapter 1.42 combines, as we saw above, the crossing of Mt Taurus that could be construed as ‘bull-taming’ or a prodigious event involving a ‘bull’; the spear-thrusting scene accompanied with the threat of devastation; and a seer’s prediction that Alexander “will subdue all nations with his spear” (δύνατα). Recension β places the omen scene not in Pieria but in Hipperia, a toponym suggesting a ‘horse’. In the Bucephalus story (Chapters 1.15 and 1.17) and in chapter 1.42 the taming of beasts is linked directly with the notion of Alexander as kosmokrator and in both cases Alexander’s figure is provided with a divine counterpart, respectively Heracles and Orpheus.

d. The laudes of Clitomidis

Word play involving Greek words would have been unintelligible to the readers of 10th century AD Naples. The same applies to explicit etymologies, which Leo either omits or adapts. Unlike Valerius he does not quote Greek words. In the pseudo-etymology of Paratonion (chapter 1.31) Leo creates a play based entirely on Latin words: he changes the toponym to the fictional Sagittarius and explains its name from sagittare. In the case of Alexander’s prophetic dream before the destruction of Tyre (chapter 1.35), which in-

25 On the various ancient explanations of the origin of the name see Anderson 1930, 3–7; on the story see Baynham 1995 with literature.
26 Cum autem (h)abiret accipere divinationem ab ipso deo, obviavit ei cervus, praeceptitque militibus suis, ut sagittarent eum. Illi vero sagittare nullamodo potuerunt. Ille autem apprehendit arcum et sagittam; dixit militibus suis: “Sic sagittatis!” Et continuo sagittavit eum, et usque hodie vocatur locus ille Sagittarius (1.31 Pfister).
volved a play on Σάτυρος and τυρὸς (‘cheese’), Valerius mentions Greek τυρὸς but Leo skips the problem altogether by changing the story and substituting uva and vinum for ‘cheese’ and ‘milk’. On the other hand, Leo’s translation, regardless of errors or misunderstandings, shows preoccupation with the meaning of proper names: common names become proper and vice-versa, on the basis of (real or assumed) meaning. Therefore implicit etymologizing becomes part of the act of translating and should be considered independently of Leo’s readership.

Leo’s abbreviated account of events in Pieria and at Troy differs substantially from what we have seen:


(Next he landed with his booty in Achaia, where he conquered many cities and added to his forces 170,000 men. From there he ascended Mt Taurus and reached a city called Persopolis, where the nine Muses are found. He went on to Phrygia and reached a temple said to be sacred to the Sun-god, in which he made an offering. Next he came to the river called Scamander, which was five cubits wide, and said: “Fortunate are you who were praised by Master Homer.” A man called Clitomidis stood before him and said: “King Alexander, I can praise your deeds better than Homer, because you performed more wonderful actions than the heroes who were at Troy.” And Alexander said to him: “I would rather become Homer’s pupil than receive the praises given to Achilles.”)

27 This can be easily deduced from Pfister’s comments (21–24) on Leo’s divergences from other recensions and his ‘misunderstandings’, and there is definitely much more material to consider.
In this translation Pieria has been replaced by Persopolis, and Ilion, possibly through confusion with ἡλιος (‘sun’), has become ‘a temple of the Sun-god’. The makarismos of heroes is unmotivated, because only the small width of Scamander is mentioned, without further comment. The offer to glorify his deeds is made to Alexander by a person named Clitomidis, not mentioned anywhere else in the Alexander Romance. Leo probably found it in his source but the triple repetition of laus in this section may be an attempt to evoke the meaning of the first component of the name: κλυτός means ‘famous’, ‘renowned’ and would thus point to the singing of κλέα ἄνδρόν, as in Homer. The reader’s impression is reinforced by Leo’s treatment of Clitomachus (chapter 1.47), the only other name in his text that has the same first component. The Theban athlete who wins a triple victory at the Isthmian Games is introduced in Pseudo-Callisthenes as εἷς τῶν ἰθηκῶν, παράδοξος ἄνηρ, ὥθεσις τῷ γένει, Κλειτόμαχος ὄνομα, and in Valerius as Thebanus quidam, cui Clitomachus nomen esset. In Leo he is presented as magnus et vir gloriaeus, cui nomen Clitomachus. The athlete’s words: ego recepta potestate pugnandi pugnabo et vinco may also allude to μάχη (‘fight’), the second component of the name. As regards Alexander’s desired relationship with Homer, in Leo it becomes one of discipulus (‘pupil’) and doctor (‘teacher’), probably reflecting the medieval times of composition.

4. An Olympic victory, and post-Olympic victories: saving Olympias

Three successive episodes in the life of the young Alexander before his accession to the throne illustrate the significance of relatively minor textual differences and provide evidence for narrative sophistication in the Alexander Romance. In both the text of A and recension β chapters 1.18–19 tell of Alexander’s participation in the Olympic games, his confrontation with young Nikolaos and how he achieves victory and the youth’s death in the course of the chariot-race; chapters 1.20–22 narrate his intervention during Philip’s wedding with Cleopatra and how he later manages to reconcile his parents with each other; and chapter 1.24 tells of the murder of Philip by

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28 Pfister 1913, 24.
29 Krintimos in the Syriac translation may be a corruption of Clitomidis.
30 Κλυτομήδης is a character in Hom. Il. 23.634. The name properly means ‘famous for his counsels’; see Kamptz 1982, 203–204 and 210. In recension ε those who offer to narrate Alexander’s deeds better than Homer are “the persons around Menander and Aristokles” (14.6 Trump): Λριστοκλέα also includes κλέος and on the whole it is most appropriate for the occasion.
Pausanias and how Alexander saves his mother from his hands and avenges his father’s murder.

Alexander’s participation in the Olympic contest (episode 1) is balanced in chapter 24 of recension β (episode 3) by Philip’s presiding (ἀγωνοθετοῦντος) in theatrical contests (ἀγώνος τελωμένου θυμέλικοῦ) which are quite significantly held in the Olympic theater (ἐν τῷ Ὀλυμπίῳ θεάτρῳ). The text of A mentions Philip’s theatrical activity, but an Olympic theater is nowhere cited as the place of Philip’s murder: it is pure invention found only in the text of recension β. Vital to the framing contests are the notions of violence, victory and death. Alexander’s opponent in the chariot race is Νικόλαος, king of the Acarnanians. His name means “conqueror of people”, but Alexander defeats and kills him nonetheless. The name Νικόλαος forms semantic clusters with νικᾶν on four pivotal moments of the first episode (A 1.18–19): Reacting to an insult Alexander swears solemnly to beat him in the race (Νικόλαε…ἂρτι σε νικήσω); during the race Nikolaos chases Alexander not in order to win (Νικόλαος οὐχ οὕτως ἔχων τὸ νικῆσαι) but to kill him because Nikolaos’ father had been killed in war by Philip; Alexander deliberately lets Nikolaos overtake him and Nikolaos assumes falsely that he has won and that he will be crowned victor (Νικόλαος…νενικηκέναι…νικητής). In the end an attendant of the temple of Olympian Zeus tells Alexander that the victory over Nikolaos prefigures future victories in war (ὡς Νικόλαον ἐνίκησας, οὕτω καὶ πολλοὺς πολεμίους νικήσεις). In the third episode (chapter 1.24) Pausanias, who wounds Philip mortally and is subsequently killed by a sword Alexander puts in his father’s hand, is presented in both recensions as the most powerful and rich person among the Thessalonians. The city of Thessalonike (Θεσσαλονίκη) was, of course, founded by Cassander after Alexander’s death and hence this piece of information is pure fiction. But Pausanias’ origin from a city, the name of which was etymologized from “victory over the Thessalians”, fits in perfectly with the notion of victorious contest balancing the framing episodes. The ‘Thessalonican’ Pausanias in the third episode constitutes the semantic counterpart of ‘Nikolaos’ in the first episode.

A pervasive feature of all three episodes falling within the semantics of victory is the interaction of ‘Olympic’ and ‘Olympian’ with the fates of ‘Olympias’, Alexander’s mother. The semantic patterns created are given

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31 In recension β he is the son of the king but the king’s name is corrupt.
32 The four citations are from A, chapter 1.18–19. In recension β, chapter 1.18–19 the first citation reads “Νικόλαε, ἄρτι σε νικήσω”, the second reads the same, the third is missing, and the fourth is slightly different.
greater emphasis in recension β in comparison with the text of A. In the wedding episode Olympias is rejected by Philip for the sake of Cleopatra, his new wife; in the third episode Pausanias, who has fallen in love with ‘Olympias’ and requested without success that she might abandon Philip and marry him, murders the king of Macedonia; in recension β this happens at the ‘Olympic theater’ and for the purpose of ‘seizing Olympias’. In both episodes Olympias is being separated from Philip and is saved by Alexander, her son. Alexander is away when the events unfold and returns ‘victorious’ (νικηφόρος) in the nick of time: in the second episode he returns νικηφόρος from the ‘Olympic games’ as the wedding is being celebrated and in the third he returns νικηφόρος from an unspecified war at the moment Pausanias has seized ‘Olympias’ and she is screaming for help.

In Pseudo-Callisthenes at the conclusion of the Olympic chariot-race (chapter 1.19) Alexander is crowned victor by the attendant of the temple of Olympian Zeus, who predicts that he will in the future defeat many enemies in war just as he defeated Nikolaos in the games. Here are the texts of A and of recension β:

καὶ ἀναβαίνει ἐστεμμένος τὸν κότινον παρὰ τὸν Ὥλυμπιον Δία. ὁ δὲ νεωκόρος φησὶν αὐτῷ: “Ἀλέξανδρε, ὡς Νικόλαον ἐνίκησας, οὕτω καὶ πολλοὺς πολεμίους νικήσεις.” (A 1.19 Kroll)
(Wearing the wreath Alexander goes up to the temple of Olympian Zeus and the temple attendant says to him: “Alexander, as you have conquered Nikolaos, so you will conquer many enemies in war.”)

στεφανοῦται λοιπὸν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ ἀναβαίνει τὸν νικητικὸν ἐστεμμένος [στεφανοὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν Ὥλυμπιῶν τὸν] κότινον [στέφανον] παρὰ τῷ Ὅλυμπῳ Δίῳ. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ τοῦ Δίῳ μάντις: “Ἀλέξανδρε, προμηθεύει σοι ὁ Ὥλυμπιος Ζεὺς ταῦτα· θάρσει· ὡσπερ Νικόλαον ἐνίκησας, οὕτως πολλοὺς νικήσεις ἐν πολέμοις.” (L 1.19 Van Thiel)
(Alexander is crowned victor and goes up to the temple of Olympian Zeus wearing the victor’s wreath. There the seer of Zeus says to him: “Alexander, the Olympian Zeus gives you this prophecy: have courage; as you have conquered Nikolaos, so you will conquer many enemies in war.”)

The text of recension β has doubled the references to Olympian Zeus and has enhanced the status of the person speaking, from a temple attendant to a seer (in Valerius he is a sacerdos); the prophecy is attributed to Olympian Zeus.
himself in whose name the seer addresses Alexander. The athetized line, not found in A but incorporated in the text of recension γ, deserves a comment: it adds the qualification ‘Olympic’ to Alexander’s crown (there are three manuscript readings: Ὦλυμπίου / Ὦλυμπίους / Ὦλυμπίων33) which combines with the two references to ‘Olympian Zeus’. Furthermore in recension β the conclusion of the Olympic games episode (chapter 1.19) picks up its very beginning (chapter 1.18): while in the text of A Alexander asks his father to let him sail to Pisa, the text of recension β adds the phrase “in order to participate in the Olympic games” (ἐπὶ τὸν ἄγωνα τῶν Ὦλυμπίων).

The two texts differ also as regards a significant detail linking Alexander’s return from the Olympic games with the events at the wedding banquet. Here is the text of A:

Ταύτην λαβὼν τὴν κληδόνα Ἀλέξανδρος ύποστρέφει καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς τὴν Πέλλην καὶ εὐφράκει ἀπὸβλήτων γεναμένην τὴν Ὀλυμπίάδα ὑπὸ Φιλίππου, γαμοῦντα δὲ τούτον τὴν ἀδελφήν Ἀττάλου Κλεοπάτραν. ἐπιτελομένου δὲ τῶν γάμων ἔχων τὸν Ὀλυμπιον τὸν νικητικὸν στέφανον εἰσέρχεται καὶ ἀνακλιθεὶς λέγει· “Πάτερ, δέξαι τῶν πρῶτον μου ἱδρώτων τὸν νικητικὸν στέφανον. ὡστιν μέντοι κάγῳ ἐκδόσῳ τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ μητέρα πρὸς γάμον, καλέσω σε εἰς τοὺς ἐμῆς μητρὸς γάμους.” Ὅ δὲ Φιλίππος ἐπὶ τοὺς εἰρημένους ἔτρυχετο. (A 1.20 Kroll)

(Having received this omen, Alexander returns home to Pella and finds that Olympias has been rejected by Philip who is about to marry Cleopatra, the sister of Attalus. While the wedding is celebrated Alexander comes in wearing the victor’s crown, leans back on a couch and says to him: “Father, receive this garland of victory, the prize of my first toils. And when I give away my mother in marriage, I will invite you to her wedding.” And Philip was angry at his words.)

In the text of A Alexander, having heard the omen of his victorious future (Ταύτην λαβὼν τὴν κληδόνα), returns home, finds Philip celebrating his wedding with Cleopatra, sister of Attalus, and enters the place wearing the ‘victorious Olympic wreath’ (τὸν Ὦλυμπιον τὸν νικητικὸν στέφανον), which he offers to his father uttering these words: “Father, receive the victor’s crown (τὸν νικητικὸν στέφανον), the fruit of my first sweat; when I give away my own mother in marriage, I will invite you to her wedding”. Philip is angered at his words.

33 See Bergson’s critical apparatus ad loc.
Here now is the text of recension β:

"Ο δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος λαβὼν τὴν κληδόνα ταύτην νικηφόρος ἀναστραφεὶς εἰς Μακεδονίαν εὐρίσκει τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ Ὄλυμπιάδα ἀπόβλητον γεναμένην ὑπὸ Φιλίππου τοῦ βασιλέως, τὸν δὲ Φιλίππον γήμαντα τὴν ἀδελφὴν Λυσίου Κλεοπάτραν τοῦνομα. αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ ἦμέρᾳ ἀγομένῳ τῶν γάμων Φιλίππου ἔξοι τῶν νικητικὸν στέφανον Ἀλέξανδρος τὸν Ὅλυμπιακὸν εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν δείπνον καὶ λέγει τῷ βασιλεῖ Φιλίπῳ: "πάτερ, δέξαι μου τῶν πρῶτων ἱδρώτων τὸν νικητικὸν στέφανον. καὶ ὅταν μέντοι κἀγὼ δίδωμι τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ μητέρα Ὅλυμπιάδα βασιλεῖ ἐτέρῳ πρὸς γάμον, καλέσω σε εἰς τὸν γάμον Ὅλυμπιάδος." καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν Ἀλέξανδρος ἀνεκλίθη ἐναντίον Φιλίππου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ γελωτοποιώς. Φιλίππος δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς λεγομένους παρὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἐτρύχετο. (recension β 1.20 Bergson)

(Having received this omen, Alexander returns victorious to Macedonia and finds that his mother Olympias has been rejected by King Philip who this very day is marrying Cleopatra, the sister of Lysias. While Philip’s wedding is celebrated Alexander comes into the banquet hall wearing the Olympic victor’s crown and says to King Philip: “Father, receive this garland of victory, the prize of my first toils. And when I give away my mother Olympias in marriage to another king, I will invite you to her wedding.” Having said this, Alexander leaned back on a couch opposite Philip, his father, making a fool of him. And Philip was angry at his words.)

The manuscripts of recension β have added the epithet νικηφόρος (‘victorious’) in the first line, have made of Cleopatra a sister of Lysias (in A Lysias is a jester) and have twice replaced ‘mother’ with ‘Olympias’ in Alexander’s taunting address to Philip. The epithet νικηφόρος, reinforcing the ‘victor’s crown’ Alexander is wearing, proceeds directly from the seer’s prediction (κληδόνα) about Alexander’s future victories against his enemies and in light of what happens at the banquet induces the reader to envisage the immediate fulfillment of the prophecy—as is the case in later versions of the Alexander Romance.34 In both versions of the next chapter (1.21) Alexander kills Lysias for making an insulting innuendo about his true father and then slaughters all of Philip’s guests. The text of recension β reinforces the description of the events and hence the association in the reader’s mind with

34 In the Byzantine poetic version the prediction includes not only Alexander’s future victories in war but also “the avenging of father and mother” (908–909 Reichmann).
Alexander’s war victories: it represents them as a mythical battle, as the fight of the Lapiths with the Centaurs and the killing by Odysseus of Penelope’s suitors (actually Alexander is referred to as νέον ἄλλον Ὀδυσσέα, ‘a new Odysseus’). In this way public and private are closely linked in the text of recension β.

The text of chapter 1.20 in recension β not only triples the references to Olympias (Ὅλυμπιάδα) by comparison with A but also arranges them so as to bracket Alexander’s victorious Olympic crown (τὸν νικητικὸν στέφανον ... τὸν Ὀλυμπιακὸν). In both versions the cluster formed out of ‘Olympias’ and the ‘Olympic crown’ (Ὁλύμπιον in A, Ὀλυμπιακὸν in recension β) picks up the immediately preceding references to the ‘Olympic crown’ and ‘Olympian Zeus’ at the end of chapter 19. The reader is thus alerted to the meanings of Ὀλυμπίας, which involved both Olympus and Olympia: as an epithet it was applied to the Muses and to goddesses as dwelling on Olympus, and also to the Olympic olive-crown; as a noun it indicated the Olympic games, an Olympic victory and an Olympiad.

To make a long story short, ‘Olympian Zeus’ sanctioned Alexander’s ‘Olympic victory’ and through the seer, his agent, predicted Alexander’s future victories; the prediction was first fulfilled after his victorious return from the games through the bloody defense of his mother ‘Olympias’ in two successive episodes—which by an intriguing coincidence occurred in Macedonia where Mt Olympus was then located. The semantic associations of chapters 19–20 recur in varied form in the events of chapter 1.24 and especially in the version of recension β: Pausanias kills Philip in the ‘Olympic theater’ in order to seize ‘Olympias’ but Alexander ‘returns victorious’ from the war and saves her. Here are the texts of A and of recension β:

* Ἡν δὲ τις Παυσανίας ὄνοματι, μέγας ἀνήρ <καὶ> πλούσιος Θεσσαλονικεύς, πλείστην δύναμιν καὶ μεγάλην περὶ ἑαυτὸν ἔχον. οὕτος ἦρασθη Ὀλυμπιάδος καὶ πέμπει τοὺς δυναμένους αὐτὴν πείσαι, ὡς καταλείψασα τὸν Φίλιππον αὐτῷ γαμηθῇ, οὐ κατένευσεν ἡ Ὀλυμπίας ἐν τούτῳ. ἐπιβουλίαν οὖν μελετᾷ ὁ Παυσανίας πυνθανόμενος περὶ τοῦ Ἀλέξανδρου, εἰ δὲ πάντως τὸν Φίλιππον ἑξελεφταῖς καὶ ἐπὶ πόλεμον ὄντος τοῦ Ἀλέξανδρου εἰς τινας πόλεις καὶ ἀγώνοις ἐπιτελουμένοις θυμελίκων, πολλαὶ παρὰ Παυσανίας τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ἀποδημοῦντα καὶ τὸν Φίλιππον ἄντα ἐν ταῖς θεωρίαις ἐπέρχεται ξιφήρης καὶ βάλλει τὴν λόγχην κατὰ τοῦ Φιλίππου καὶ ἠστόχησε κατά τῆς πλευρᾶς πλήξας· οὐκ ἀνηρέθη δὲ παραυτά.... Αὐτὴ δὲ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ εἰσήρχετο νεκρικής οὖν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος.... (A 1.24 Kroll)
(There was a certain man named Pausanias, an important and rich man of Thessalonike, surrounded by a powerful and big retinue. He conceived a desire for Olympias and sent some powerful men to persuade her to abandon Philip and marry himself. But Olympias rejected his offer. And Pausanias begins to plot seeking an opportunity when Alexander would be away from Macedonia. Some time later Alexander happened to be campaigning against some cities while at home a theatrical performance was taking place. When Pausanias heard that Alexander was away and that Philip was at the theater he came in armed with a sword and hurled his spear against Philip and struck him in the side but did not kill him rightaway. … On that very day Alexander entered the city victorious …)

(There was a certain man named Pausanias, an important and very rich man, and ruler of all the Thessalonicans. He conceived a desire for Olympias, Alexander’s mother, and sent some powerful men to persuade her to abandon Philip, her husband, and marry himself; he also sent her a great deal of money. But Olympias rejected his offer. And having heard that Alexander was away campaigning, Pausanias came where Philip was, during a theatrical performance. While Philip was presiding over the contests in the Olympic theater, Pausanias came into the theater, armed with a sword and accompanied by a number of noblemen. He intended to murder Philip, in order to seize Olympias. He attacked him and struck him in the side with his sword, but did not kill him … It happened that on that very day Alexander returned victorious from the war.)
One final point concerns the names of the people Alexander confronts in the episodes of the wedding banquet and the attempted rape of Olympias. As noted above, recension β makes Lysias the brother of Cleopatra and identifies him with the jester by the same name in the narrative of Α. Thus the innuendo about Alexander’s true father (“King Philip, now you will breed legitimate children”) comes from the lips of Philip’s own brother-in-law. The significance of Lysias’ name is explained in chapter 1.22 of recension β, at the conclusion of the whole episode: “Thereafter people who get married avoid mentioning the name Lysias (τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Λυσίου ... ὀνομάζειν), for fear his mention (ὄνομασθέντος) should set up a division between them (διάλυσιν)”. Following the killing of Lysias Alexander makes efforts to achieve a reconciliation (διαλαλαγήναι) between his father and mother and it is immediately after he has done so (διήλλαξε τοὺς γονεῖς) that the text of recension β explains the derivation of ‘Lysias’ from (δια)λύειν. Therefore, from a semantic viewpoint the etymology of ‘Lysias’ functions like a concluding comment e contrario on the efforts of ‘reconciliation’ which take up the whole chapter. One final point: since, like the name ‘Nikolaos’, the name ‘Lysias’ is viewed as an omen, Alexander’s first killing after the games fulfills in etymological terms his ‘prophetic’ victory in the chariot race.

‘Pausanias’, who in chapter 24 attempts to make Olympias abandon (καταλεῖψαι) Philip, has a name that derives from παύειν (‘bring to an end’) and may overlap in meaning with (δια)λύειν and ‘Lysias’, the agent of ‘separation’ between Alexander’s parents. This Pausanias that conceives a desire for Olympias and attempts to abduct her is not found in our historiographical sources but only in the Alexander Romance. The fictional account makes him another agent of attempted separation, like Lysias, and his origin in ‘Thessalonike’ makes him the semantic counterpart of ‘Nikolaos’. Alexander’s successful confrontation with these three characters is fraught with significance for the learned reader of the romance.

Most of the semantic associations and clearly the subtler ones among those noted above would not have been obvious to those readers of Valerius who did not know Greek; and even if they knew Greek, it would have been almost impossible for them to derive etymological associations of this kind from a Latin text. With explicit etymologies we stand on firmer ground. Sometimes Valerius attempts to make explicit etymologies intelligible to his readers, if necessary by quoting the Greek. This would be, for instance the case of aitia of toponyms in 1.31. I quote one example, the etymology of Παρατόνιον (real name: Παραιτόνιον):
Ipse autem rex cum forte in agro, ut adsolet, spatiaretur, cervam intuitus pastui occupatam unum ex his qui destinandis sagittis solliertor habe- batur iaculari bestiam iubet. qui cum rem non ex opinione praeiudicata fecisset leviusque ictum animal evasisset, exclamare Alexander fertur, Graeco scilicet verbo, quod remissior arcus intentio sagittam imbecillius exegisset, παρὰ τόνον istud factum videri. ex eoque dictum Paratonium; etiam post frequentatae urbi nomen indidem datum.

(When the king happened to be taking his habitual walk in the fields he spotted a deer grazing. He ordered one of his archers who was considered particularly accurate in shooting, to hit the animal. When the archer did not perform as expected of him and the lightly wounded deer escaped, it is said that Alexander exclaimed (in Greek, of course) that he thought the slack bowstring had led to a feeble arrowshot, that this was ‘a shot from an ill-strung bow’ (παρὰ τόνον). Because of this the place was called Paratonium; and when later the city was peopled it received its name from this event.)

In the case of the significant name ‘Lysias’ Julius Valerius renders the Greek aetiological comment in Latin but does not include the Greek word διαλύσις in order to become more specific: “placet denique Lysiae nomen coniugali- bus ritibus in perpetuum aboleri, quod apellatio illa solutionem coepti cum Cleopatra <coniugii> fecisset” (1.22). As regards the repeated puns on Νικόλαος and νικᾶν, he condenses the first passage (Nicolae ... in hoc pre- senti certamine et Acarnaniae telo superabo), omits the next two and concentrates on the priest’s prediction: here a quadruple repetition of vincere and derivatives emphasizes the connection between the athletic victory and future war victories and alerts the learned reader to the meaning of Nicolaum in Greek:

Exin victor corona redimitus conoeeno templo cum Iovem Olympium salutaret, aestimatione rei gestae aut instinctu dei sacerdotem ferunt sic fortunam victoriae interpretatum ut, quod primo certamine Nicolaum vicisset, esset sibi coniectare perfacile multos eum populos vinciturum universitatisque dominio potiturum. (Valerius 1.19 Rosellini)

(When next Alexander had gone up to the temple wearing the victor’s crown and was worshipping Olympian Zeus, it is said that the priest, either because he appreciated the achievement or through divine admonition, interpreted the future significance of the victory as follows: he said that since Alexander in his first contest had defeated Nikolaos he...
very easily foresaw that he would defeat many nations and would achieve world dominion.)

In Leo’s narrative (1.18–19 Pfister) there are no Olympic games, no Olympic crown and no Olympian Zeus, and hence ‘Olympias’ stands alone. The contest is presented as a ‘fight’ (pugna) between Alexander and Nikolaos but there is no pun on the latter’s name and Alexander’s victory. Chapters 1.21–22 mention Lisias as one of the guests (unus ex discumbentibus) and his killing but not the etymology of his name (it was probably not found in his source). Finally in chapter 1.24 Thessalonike, Pausanias’ city of origin, is omitted (though it is found in Pseudo-Callisthenes). As regards later Greek versions of the Alexander Romance a new twist to Alexander’s victory over ‘Nikolaos’ is given in the Modern Greek prose version: Alexander is crowned by the people (λαός) and his name is proclaimed everywhere for his victory (νίκην):35

_In the rhymed version Nikolaos appears after Alexander has defeated his other opponents; there may be a pun in these lines: καὶ ὅλους τοὺς ἐνίκησε ... Καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ Νικόλαος ... (322–324 Holton)._


Pfister, F. 1913. Der Alexanderroman des Archipresbyters Leo, Heidelberg: Carl Winter.


