

The Author of the *Alexander Romance*¹

RICHARD STONEMAN
University of Exeter

The *Alexander Romance* (*AR*) is one of the most influential works of Greek antiquity. This is a surprising fact. An assemblage of legends about Alexander (*Al*) constructed around a historical core, it is less believable than any of the better known historical accounts of Curtius, Diodorus, Justin or Arrian. It is an intriguing combination of genres: letters, rhetorical diatribes and set pieces, passages of prosimetrum (prose mixed with verse) and of choliambics ('limping' iambics), with two major insertions, the Christian work of Palladius *On the Brahmans* and the *Death and Testament of Alexander*. Apparently lacking any literary unity, it has nevertheless taken on a life as an independent work, and one which acquires more unity of meaning and purpose with every successive adaptation. The aim of this paper is to characterise the work in such a way as to clarify its generic affiliations, and thus its literary aims.

If we regard the work as belonging in largely the form of the first recension (*A*) to the Hellenistic age,² what process of composition should we envisage? B.E. Perry's assertion that the Greek novel was invented on a Tuesday afternoon in July is famous, and draws welcome attention to the absurdity of envisaging the origin of any literary work (or genre) as a kind of sudden event. Composition takes time, and over time different sources are brought into play.

¹ This article is an abridged version of part of the introduction to my edition, published in Italian, of the *Alexander Romance*: Stoneman 2007, xxxiv-lvi.

² For the arguments for a Hellenistic date, see Stoneman 2007, xxix-xxxiii.

Historical Novel and Bios

There are, as we now know, plenty of other ancient novels with historical characters as their protagonists. We were familiar with the appearance of historical characters in Chariton (who presented his work as a ‘continuation’ of Thucydides),³ but the papyri have revealed fragments of tales about Ninus of Babylon and about Sesonchosis.⁴ This fact has led Ruzena Dostalova to characterise the ‘romanzo storico’ as ‘la dissoluzione della storiografia.’⁵ Romance of this kind is, to be sure, a different matter from the erotic (‘romantic’!) novels that form the traditional canon of the Greek novels.

If we then cast our eyes around for other examples of this kind of fictionalised history, we may light upon such works as those of Eupolemus and Artapanus, Jewish authors who turned their historical characters into figures of legend and romance: Moses becomes the founder of Meroe, etc.⁶ History, as Cornford pointed out, has a tendency to slide into legend. It normally requires about one generation from the death of a major historical figure before all first-hand memory is lost and stories about him/her begin to become legendary: one thinks of Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Hitler. One cannot trace the developments back so far with Ninus and Sesonchosis, but one may assume a gap of at least a generation before the rise of the systematic Alexander legends. (Though some, it is true, like his reaching the Ganges, began to be current in his lifetime).

So perhaps Eduard Schwartz was not far off the mark in seeing the origins of romance in hellenistic history writing, though his focus was rather on the erotic novels.⁷ He, like Dostalova, spoke of a ‘degeneration’ of one genre into another. Many have seen the *AR* as ‘a fictional distortion of some Cleitarchic [sic] model.’⁸ Karl Kerényi,⁹ too, spoke of a ‘lukewarm breeze’ of ‘oriental indifference to truth and untruth’ which invaded Greek history writing after Aristotle. Is it necessary to look at it in these terms?

Let us pause for a moment on the concept of the ‘historical novel’. The *AR* is a fictional account of a genuine historical character, set in the past. It

³ Hägg 1987.

⁴ Stephens and Winkler 1995.

⁵ Dostálová 1996.

⁶ A useful discussion is Gruen 1998, 150-160.

⁷ See Giangrande 1962. Lavagnini too (1950) argued that novels result from the degeneration of local myths into mere legends and *erotika pathemata*.

⁸ Cizek 1978 – but I would not accept Cizek’s interpretation of the *AR* as a Propitian folk-tale about good and evil.

⁹ Kerényi 1927, 6.

may even seem to conform to Georg Lukacs' definition: 'the aim of the historical novel... is to portray the kind of individual destiny that can *directly* and at the same time typically express the problems of an epoch.'¹⁰

However, Tomas Hägg, in his article on the beginnings of the historical novel,¹¹ discounts *AR* as well as the *Cyropaedia* and the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* as real historical novels precisely because of their focus on historical individuals as protagonists rather than background figures such as Hermocrates in Chariton, or Napoleon in Tolstoy. 'The easiest way out, no doubt, is to refer to all three and their cognates as lives (βίοι, *vitae*) or, rather, as romanticised biographies, to mark the difference from the Plutarchian *life*' (193).

This approach chimes indeed with the title given to the work in some MSS, βίος (as in A), though other titles are πράξεις (end of book I of A), βίος καὶ πράξεις in L, διήγησις ὄντως θαυμασία (??) and *res gestae* (the equivalent of πράξεις) in Valerius.

The term βίος typically includes πράξεις. The type of the hellenistic literary *bios* is very limited and irrelevant for our purposes.¹² It is inadequate for men of action. The question as to whether there was ever a genre of hellenistic political biography is imponderable,¹³ and the first definition of the *bios* that we have is Plutarch's:

I am writing biography not history, and the truth is that the most brilliant exploits often tell us nothing of the virtues or vices of the men who performed them, while on the other hand a chance remark or a joke may reveal far more of a man's character than the mere feat of winning battles in which thousands fall.¹⁴

This clearly incorporates *praxeis* while not being confined to them. It also recalls E.M. Forster's dictum that the novelist's job is to tell you more about the historical character than a historian could. It is a short step from this to allowing *plasma*, 'what might have happened', into your narrative. We can fill out Hägg's term, the romanticised *bios*, by looking at other congeners of

¹⁰ Lukacs 1969, 342.

¹¹ Hägg 1987.

¹² The 'biographies' of men of learning by Hermippos of Smyrna (ca 250-200 BC) were entitled περὶ τοῦ βίος τοῦ, and were characterised by 'learned sensationalism' (Mogliano 1971). See in general Bollansée 1999.

¹³ Geiger 1985.

¹⁴ Plut. *Alex* 1. Plutarch says of *bios* what Raoul Mortley (1996, 58) says is the function of *praxeis* – to be a branch of ethics, and to seek the 'type' to enable imitation.

the *AR*. There is no evidence of a hellenistic political biography having been written about Alexander:¹⁵ his exploits were always of the nature of history rather than biography, *praxeis* first and foremost. The impact of epic and *encomium* may also to be reckoned with. The epics that described Alexander's expedition are lost and have left barely an echo; *encomia* there must have been, and Veneri (2002) has made the attractive suggestion that Callisthenes' work on Alexander took this form rather than that of a full scale history – which might be a reason why it has left so little trace in the later record.¹⁶ *Bios* also merges with aretalogy, a form which goes back to Plato's description of the last days of Socrates but which received a particular impetus in the later Hellenistic and early Roman periods, not least in Jewish writing such as Philo's *Life of Moses*. Martin Braun developed this line of approach to *bios* in his study of 'the national character of hero romance',¹⁷ which focuses on Ninus, Sesonchosis and Moses as well as Alexander.

Lives of philosophers also have some affinities with elements of *AR*. Wehrli¹⁸ has traced the form back to the wisdom books of earliest ages, and argued persuasively that the philosophic 'life' grows out of the collecting of sayings, *χρῆται*, of wise men. The life is there mainly as a vehicle for the wise saying. The saying then becomes one of the building blocks of biography.¹⁹ There are a number of these in the *AR*, all occurring in the more 'historical' part: the reconciliation of Al's parents, the *mot* on eating the horses, Phidon's remark 'we cannot get another Alexander', and the proverb-like expressions about wasps, sheep and barking dogs. (However, *AR* misses Al's most famous quip: 'so would I, if I were Parmenio'). *χρῆται* are an important element of the formation of the Gospel traditions about Jesus. Plutarch also collected *ἀποφθέγματα*, no doubt an aspect of his interest in character and biography.

Another form of narrative development of the wise saying is the fable. F.R. Adrados²⁰ has drawn attention to this aspect of the genesis of the fable, and also to the appearance of several fable-like themes in *AR*: the story of

¹⁵ Contra Garcia Gual 1988, who proposes five components that made up the *AR*: a hellenistic biography of the second to first century BC; the Letter of Al and Darius; the Marvels of India; the episodes of Nectanebo, the Gymnosophists and Candace; historical fragments including the Last Days.

¹⁶ Momigliano 1971, 83 shows that it is hard to separate the three types of historical *encomium* / biography of a king / political history centred around a king.

¹⁷ Braun 1938; cf. also Scobie 1969, 25.

¹⁸ Wehrli 1973.

¹⁹ Mejer 1978, 91; Skidmore 1996, 35-43.

²⁰ Adrados 1999, 545-547.

the wise man who falls into a pit because his eyes are fixed on the stars (Thales; cf. Nectanebo: 402, 528, 627), as well as the theme of ‘small versus great’ (633; Al and Porus); the theme of ‘addiction to life’ and the Gymnosophists episode (668, 669). Anecdotes of this kind are developed to depict a personality.

The example par excellence of this type of life, and one that is important to Adrados’ argument, is the *Life of Aesop*. This has a number of resemblances to *AR*, in particular the trickster aspects of the hero and his skill in solving riddles and deciphering inscriptions.²¹ Adrados²² has argued that this emerged from a cynic milieu and draws attention in particular to the use of *χρεία*. He proposes (673-677) that the development of biography owes a good deal to Cynic approaches to philosophy, which focussed on the practical application of reflection rather than on abstract thought. Similarly in *AR* there are clear examples of Cynic ideas (notably in the Gymnosophists episode) and I am going to spend some time discussing this.

Philosophy and Religion in AR: (a) Therapy

Religious and philosophical ideas and manifestations are an important structuring principle of the work, and despite its narrative disorders it has a curiously consistent ethical stance which extends even to later accretions such as the Brahmins episode. In one sense the *AR* is the story of the fulfilment of Al.’s *pothos* in the most extreme degree. When Dandamis says (in Palladius’ *Life of the Brahmins* 2,22) ‘what is it that makes you great enough to slaughter all these people?... When you have conquered everybody, and taken possession of all the world, you will possess no more land than I have as I lie down’, he acutely perceives that Al.’s will to conquest is a defence against the fear of death.²³ It is a commonplace of Hellenistic philosophy that fear of death is endemic in mankind and that the therapeutic purpose of philosophy is to eliminate it. The point is very apparent in the Cynic diatribe which is the basis of Palladius, less common in what we have of other Cynic philosophy. But it is a prominent Epicurean and Stoic theme.²⁴ From this

²¹ Stoneman 1995.

²² Adrados 1999; cf. Adrados 1979.

²³ On Al.’s desire for immortality, see Teles ap. Stob. *Ecl.* 97,31.

²⁴ For Richard Burton, author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, fear and foreknowledge of death are a torment worse than death itself. (*Anatomy of Melancholy* Pt 1, sec 2, mem 4, subs 7; I. 364 f in the Everyman edition.) The idea occurs also in Epicurus’ predecessor Democritus frg. 189 DK, cf. 203-206 (Stob. *Ecl.* 3,4,73; 3,4,75; 3,4,79; 3,4,80) – those

perspective, Al seems an unreconstructed Hellenistic man, sorely in need of therapy for his anxieties.

(b) *Other Cynic elements*

A striking feature of *AR* is the mixture of prose and verse in the narrative. Most of the verse passages are in choliambics. Prosimetrum is not particularly common in classical literature though the novels offer a few examples (*Iolaus*, *Tinouphis*, Petronius).²⁵ Choliambic writing is however associated with the Cynics in other genres.²⁶ Its first proponent is Cercidas, and equally important are the writings of Phoenix of Colophon. Choliambics underwent a renaissance in the third century BC, being used for a variety of kinds of poetry, but very often for moralising verses, often with a Cynic bent. One author who used choliambics (as well as other metres) for narrative poetry was

who hate life yet still desire it for fear of Hades. Waiting for death poisons life: see 3,24,3; cf. Porph. *Abst.* 1,54,3. One of the manifestations of fear of death is the desire for wealth, power and conquest. Though the point is very apparent in the Cynic diatribe which is the basis of Palladius, the theme is relatively uncommon in what we have of Cynic philosophy. The point is made by Cercidas (*Meliamb.* 4) that avarice is a way of cheating, or at least ignoring death. Antisthenes is reported to have said, 'If you don't die, you'll be sorry you didn't!' (*Gnomol. Vat.* 5, cf. Paquet 1992, 61 no. 89). Diogenes asked 'How can death be an evil?' (Diog. Laert. 6,68). Epictetus offers the Stoicised idea that death is not an evil unless accompanied by dishonour (*Disc.* 1,24,6-8).

There are passages in Lucretius and elsewhere which see aggression, and the desire to amass wealth and power, as hedges against the fear of death: Lucr. 3,59-77; 3,944-945; cf. 1,34; Epic. frg. 458 Usener, 'the limitless desire for wealth and power arises because the fear of death is limitless'. Lucretius famously writes of those who resort even to self-mutilation and suicide through the fear of death (6,1208-1212; 6,1288ff; cf. Philodemus *de morte* c. 14-16): one thinks of Alexander's attempted suicide on his deathbed (3,32). The fear of death derives from the desire for immortality (Epic. *ad Menoec.* ap. Diog. Laert. 10,124; cf. Nussbaum 1994, 113, 192); it is the act of a fool to cling to life, not recognising his mortality (Philod. *de morte* 38,25-39). The Stoic Musonius Rufus, too, stresses (xvii, p. 91,21-92,2 Hense) that the philosopher must master the fear of death, and it is one of the strengths of the wise man: *magna est gratia iusto, nullo modo mortem timere... novit immortale consilium, providentiam per integritatem* (= ἀπάθειαν) *assequi* (Philo, *de providentia* 1,63). Seen in this perspective, Al seems an unreconstructed Hellenistic man, sorely in need of therapy for his anxieties.

See in general Nussbaum 1994, 198, 218; Segal 1990, 187f. Cf. also Val. Max. 9,12,13.

²⁵ Stephens and Winkler 1995, 365.

²⁶ Gerhard 1909, 202-228 took the view that choliambic writing was exclusively associated with Cynic authors: this extreme view was contested by Knox 1923, but it is appropriate that the metre originally employed by Hipponax for savage invective should be adopted by the Cynics for their caustic and subversive tirades.

Aeschriion of Samos (or Mytilene).²⁷ The Suda tells us that he travelled with Alexander and was the lover of Aristotle. His son Lysanias (DL 6,23) may have been the teacher of Eratosthenes. He referred to the ‘Ape-islands’ (Tzetzes ad Lycophr. 688 p.227) and thus seems to have been interested in exotica. He was probably active around 300 BC. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he is the author of the choliambic passages of *AR*: all the interests seem to fit! He must too have known Callisthenes and Onesicritus: I could envisage him reworking Onesicritus’ description of the Brahmans into the form it takes in *AR* 3,6.

(c) *The Utopian perspective*

As well as describing the world as it is (geography) and defining its world by the otherness of what it is not (the monstrous races) *AR* also conveys implicitly a view of the world as it ought to be. The foundation of Alexandria is a key episode in this perspective: the city is to be an ideal one, carefully planed and resistant to natural disasters and war. C. Jouanno²⁸ has suggested that the long narrative of the destruction of Thebes is in effect a foil to this positive aspect of creation of an ideal city. But *AR* goes further than this in its exploration of how the world ought to be. The theme is dominant in the Brahman dialogue, and expanded most harmoniously with the original in the Palladius work inserted after it. In its original, perhaps hellenistic, Cynic form, the *De Bragmanibus* recalls other Hellenistic works about distant lands, like those of Iambulus, Theopompus and Amometus, all of which have a distinctly Utopian colouring. That is, they portray a society which resembles but differs from the known world and thus offers a philosophical commentary, a distancing manoeuvre, on what is familiar. While the roots of such ideal societies can – like most things in Greek literature – be found in Homer, in this case the world of his Phaeacians, there is undoubtedly a community of themes linking the Hellenistic works, the Brahman dialogue and Palladius: the people in question live separately from the world (over a river), their diet is frugal and perhaps vegetarian, they live long and do not fear death, even welcoming it in due time; they eschew luxury and wealth, they contemplate the divine. In all this they represent a foil to Al’s quest for power and glory, an ideal of which even he can see the attraction.

²⁷ Tzetzes (*Chil.* 8,401) describes him as καὶ ἔπη καὶ ἰάμβους δὴ σὺν ἄλλοις πόσοις γράψας.

²⁸ Jouanno 1993.

The Cynic elements in the Brahman dialogue are indisputable, and Theopompus seems also to have been close to the Cynics in his attitudes.²⁹ There is relatively little evidence for positive attitudes, actual arguments³⁰ or creative speculation among Cynic philosophers; however, a philosopher who carried his *kosmos* in his knapsack could certainly carry Utopia in his mind. Utopia is essentially a critical device not a programme. The context of a fiction is the ideal place to develop a contrast between ideal and reality without the inconvenience of practical considerations. Just as Alexander is useful to Cynics in their debate about the ideal ruler, not because they wanted rulers but because they wanted to give a positive valuation to an ideal by calling it royal, so *Al* has been used to explore the possibilities of a radically different social order, a world turned upside down.

Other than philosophy, some of the elements that make up the texture of *AR* are the debate in Athens; the will; patriotic tales and local legends; travellers' tales; letters; and folktale elements.³¹ If we bring together these various generic elements we find that the works of antiquity that *AR* most resembles are the *Life of Aesop* and the *Apocryphal Acts*;³² if we look at origins, the model of a 'degeneration' of history and an amalgamation with other sub-genres, such as the traveller's tale, seems to be the most fruitful. All these elements also go into the 'canonical' novels, as Massimo Fusillo shows: he defines the novel as in its nature an 'encyclopaedic' genre (67).³³

Egyptian elements

J.W.B. Barns,³⁴ in a somewhat neglected article, drew attention to the importance of the Egyptian storytelling tradition to the rise of the Greek novel, and suggested that this provided one of the fundamental impetuses to the growth of Greek fiction in the Hellenistic period. The above discussion has concentrated on *AR* as a work of Greek literature, and its generic antecedents in that tradition (including Alexandrian aspects such as *patria*). However, the work is not just Greek but Egyptian. The major Egyptian elements are the Nectanebo story, the role of Sarapis, the idea that Alexander is a reincarnation, and

²⁹ Shrimpton 1991, 11.

³⁰ Nussbaum 1994, 8.

³¹ See the full discussion in Stoneman 2007, xliii-li.

³² Pervo 1987, 56, and further references in his index s.v.

³³ Cf. Weinreich 1962 on the novel as a merger of history and epic.

³⁴ Barns 1956; see also Jasnow 1997; Macuch 1989; Perry 1966; Weinreich 1911; Spiegelberg 1898; Stephens 2003.

avenger, of the old Pharaoh, the account of Alexandria, and perhaps even the episode of the Amazons, who also turn up in demotic literature.

As we know very little about writing by Egyptian authors in Greek, it is not easy to suggest from what milieu such a work might have arisen. Few other works of this kind survive, though the *Dream of Nectanebo* is an obvious example of a demotic work with a similar theme to that of *AR*. The *Tale of Tefnut* is remarkable in being extant both in demotic and in Greek, and is thus a valuable piece of evidence for traffic between the two cultural milieux.³⁵ Other examples of Greek writing by Egyptian authors include Manetho, author of a chronology of Egyptian rulers, and Isidore of Memphis, author of a work on Egyptian religion in Greek verse.³⁶ Common sense suggests that a work favourable, as this is, to Ptolemaic rule, would emerge from circles close to the court, and would perhaps be a part of the wider interest in Egyptian history shown by Ptolemy II and III.

The Author of the Alexander Romance

One or two speculations or indications have already been offered about the kind of author who might have written such a work as *AR*. While it is unlikely that an author can ever be identified for the work, consideration of the possibilities may sharpen our perception of the kind of work this is, of its genre in fact.

Several MSS of the work attribute it to Callisthenes, Al.'s court historian.³⁷ This is plainly impossible. Callisthenes died before the end of Al.'s expedition and could not possibly have written about his death, for example. The attribution may represent a perception of the kind of history *AR* represents: Callisthenes was known to have emphasised Al.'s divinity and the fabulous elements of his story. However, the actual content of *AR* seems as far as we can tell to be closer to the treatment of Cleitarchus. The few fragments of Callisthenes' book on Al, of which curiously little is known, instantly preclude the possibility that it bore much resemblance to *AR*.³⁸

Julius Valerius's MSS attribute the work to Aesop. This may reflect a perception of the kind of work this is, though in fact fable elements are not particularly prominent in the work. A closer affinity is with the anonymous

³⁵ Lichtheim 1980, 161-183; West 1969.

³⁶ Fowden 1986, 49-51.

³⁷ See Stoneman 2007, 467-468.

³⁸ Veneri 2002.

Life of Aesop, with which *AR* shares a number of themes and stylistic elements. This attribution seems to reflect the interest in Aesop as a philosopher (of a kind) in the second and third centuries AD, which is also evinced by Apuleius.³⁹

If we summarise what can be deduced from the text about its author, I would propose that we know the following. The author was a competent speaker and writer of Greek though with some knowledge of Egyptian language and phraseology, and a considerable knowledge of and interest in Egyptian affairs, especially Ptolemaic chancellery style, Ptolemaic religious policy, researches into Egyptian antiquities (*Sesonchosis*) and geography (*Meroe*). He appears to have known little of the geography of Greece and Asia Minor, and was very ready to confuse the geography of the Hindu Kush, the Gedrosian desert and the regions south of Memphis. On the other hand, beside this Egypt-based author we find evidence of an author who was interested in the forms of Greek rhetorical debate (though with a very shaky knowledge of Greek fifth and fourth century history) and in rather rudimentary forms of philosophical speculation (the Brahman episode). The author may, in the earliest version of his work, have written considerable stretches of it in choliambic verse. The author was also prone to confuse historical events (*Arbela* and *Issus*) and the order of events (the Greek campaigns and those in Asia Minor). From time to time he exhibits an interest in the metaphysical implications of *Al's* career, his role as *kosmokrator* and at the same time victim. Could all these characteristics be combined in a single author?

Here is a story. One of *Al's* companions (but definitely not *Callisthenes*) had made some progress with his laudatory history of *Al* when the expedition ended. He entrusted his manuscript to one of the more literate companions of his voyage, the Cynic poet *Aeschrion* of *Samos*. *Aeschrion* saw this as an opportunity to extend his own literary fame and reworked much of the narrative in his own favourite metre of choliambics. Because he was also friendly with *Onesicritus* he was able to draw on the latter's accounts of the east and of the Brahmins as well. The available writing materials were not of the best (palm leaves, only large enough for short sections of text) and the copy he brought home with him to Greece was not easy to read. On *Aeschrion's* death this curious text passed into the hands of his son *Lysanias*. *Lysanias*, as teacher of *Eratosthenes*, was able to spend some of his career in Alexandria and to move in the intellectual and scholarly circles revolving around the Museum. Meanwhile, in another part of the empire, it had become fashionable to compose fictional letters around the careers of historical

³⁹ Stoneman 1999.

individuals. Possibly this had in fact been a regular school exercise in Alexandria and some gifted pupil decided to extend his school compositions into a whole series of letters between Al and Darius. Perhaps this author, or another writer, saw the possibility of combining this letter series with the battered manuscript that Lysanias had inherited from his father. In Alexandria, there was little detailed knowledge of Greek topography, and as the leaves of the original MS had become disordered, it was necessary to piece the narrative together somehow, with the result that many historical events got out of order. Because this was not a scholarly work but one for a popular publisher, this did not matter much. To please his Ptolemaic patron, the Alexandrian author saw an opportunity to combine the texts into something that would make the reading public more aware of the legitimacy of the Ptolemies as Pharaohs. The already current Nectanebo story was thus given a setting in a longer narrative. Other Egyptian elements, notably the description of Alexandria and the Candace episode, were slotted in (Candace in the wrong place in the narrative). The existence of a pamphlet on the last days and will of Al was too good an opportunity to miss, and our author tagged this on to the end of his story, too tired by that time to iron out its inconsistencies with the rest of the text, though pleased that it favoured Ptolemy's claim to the throne of Egypt. In copying out his *Life of Alexander*, he not only had to arrange the disordered leaves of the MS that had come from central Asia, thus confusing the geography, but he had to copy out verses in a metre with which he was not familiar and which were often smudged in the MS. Much of it he simply rewrote as prose. Subsequent copyists of this unexpectedly successful work continued this process.

Bestsellers are not always anticipated by their authors, or their authors' friends. Eratosthenes was amazed at the resonance achieved by the work of his school friend, who, though his skill in free composition had always been recognised, had always done so much less well than he in geography classes. I hope that this little jeu d'esprit may serve, *exempli gratia*, as an account of the way in which *AR* might have come into being as a Hellenistic text. Not only did its author not know that his work was going to be one of the most popular works of all time; he also did not know that he had invented the historical novel.⁴⁰ It was, of course, completed on a Tuesday afternoon in July.

⁴⁰ A rival claim to this priority could of course be put forward by Xenophon, based on his *Education of Cyrus*. The latter, however, makes far less effort than the author of *AR* to follow a historical narrative, and contains much more free invention.

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