

Afterward

By Oliver Stone

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I've learned much from the foregoing essays by this distinguished panel of historians, and it's certainly exciting to feel Alexander once again breathe among us, to be analyzed and re-digested in ways peculiar to our present era. By example, when the film was released in 2004-05, I found very few film reviewers around the world were able to identify with Alexander's concepts of war and conquest, largely because of the experiences we've suffered in the last century; and in this century, too many took the facile way out in condemning the film by negatively comparing Alexander to George Bush.

On the other hand, there appeared a large and fresh body of internet users who seemed to be discovering Alexander for the first time and communicated their newfound enthusiasm for the classical world in "chat groups", some even taking summer holidays together in Macedonia. Perhaps the movie failed in the English language countries, yet it was a success in the Spanish, German, French, Russian, Korean, Japanese, Italian, Swedish and Arab language countries, in many of them the top grossing film of that season. The film ended up in the top 20 films of the years in the foreign markets outside the United States, and ranked higher than 4 of the 5 Academy Award-nominated films, which tells us something really about the balance of power the English language has in depicting global reality.

But I'd be at fault to claim relative success when the film continued to haunt me for two years after release. I needed that extra time, as I found out and will explain later, to sort out some of the unanswered questions I still had about this highly complicated man, questions which I failed to answer dramatically enough.

I take humbly the criticisms of Professor Llewellyn-Jones, who was one of our consultants on Persian matters. I believe I did err fundamentally in my understanding of the Persian harem, allowing a cloud of Hollywood fantasy to obscure my realistic

judgment as to what it was really like; I do wish Jeanne Moreau had done the movie and I had stuck by my original dialogue between Alexander and Sisygambis as it showed an overlooked aspect of Alexander. I also take to heart Elizabeth Carney's "Olympias and Oliver" about my tendency toward sexual stereotyping. Hers is a tough piece, and yet I wonder if Prof. Carney's feminist point of view has itself created a rather heartless abstract that sees life through the single prism of sexuality; important as gender may be, is it the determinant motive of history; are there not other factors?

Is Olympias a stereotype? Is Angelina Jolie's performance over the top? Some would scream 'yes!', but others might say, 'this person was so exaggerated, so outrageous, I can't really relate to this person – but I certainly have known someone like this.' Perhaps an eccentric aunt, a friend, an enemy, or someone you've only read about but allowed to enter your imagination. What I'm suggesting is that a stereotype can work -- because of the fact that it is memorable and sometimes necessary, as in a satire like "Natural Born Killers" or melodrama like "Scarface" -- to bring the stereotype into an extreme close-up for the eye once again to awaken and see. Angelina Jolie magnifies a fierce Medea-like apprehension of reality; she literally comes out of the screen with the guts of a Joan Crawford, Faye Dunaway, or Bette Davis, all of whom at times were considered stereotypical, over-the-top-women in their films, but with time have grown more credible in our consciousness because they do, in fact, reflect a certain truth in life. Tucked away in our ancient memories are stereotypes of authoritative figures – dinosaurs, all manner of predatory animals, headmasters and teachers, cannibals, nun, business partners, mother and father, etc, all of whom, in some way, have become giant and determining close-ups in our lives. Is this a stereotype? No. I think this is a unique phenomenon, because I think the person who is larger than life, who is "in your face", is achieving something very fresh to the eye in making sure you remember him or her. This is drama. And somehow we are mislabeling the uncomfortable, the alien, the other, as the stereotype because we are keeping it away from ourselves, outside our emotional comfort zone.

I still wonder that historians have not raised the question of why Alexander, after conquering Babylon, would not see his mother for 11 years. There certainly seems to have been some sort of emotional conflict at its root. In the film, we show Alexander

shocking the Greeks with his egalitarian treatment of Asian women (and men) – in his marriage to Roxanne and his treatment of Stateira. In the harem at Babylon, he pronounces all women and eunuchs free to go home forthwith, which provokes the first of the protests from his Greek companions. I wonder if Professor Carney, in referencing “domineering dowagers and scheming concubines”, smears rather than elucidates. Because her negativity disallows the director or the writer from pursuing a subject where a woman is actually a devourer or a dominatrix. This is not to say that all women are, but certainly these are fascinating characters and it’s the right of a dramatist to bring out that character. To protest, in the name of feminism, against these women’s existence is to distort history; as we know, there’ve been through time, many strong, original, independent women who have acted for benefit and destruction. Let us not spare one for the other. Perhaps Professor Carney could fault me for not having concentrated enough on the positive image, but then again she perceives the Vietnamese heroine, Le Ly Hayslip, from my film “Heaven and East” (1993), as a sexual victim, which I think is partly true, but fails to comprehend the greater significance of Le Ly overcoming her adversities and forgiving her persecutors. Perhaps the professor would deem this a stereotype as well, but if so, it was the prime conflict of Le Ly’s life. I also think the portrayal of strong, if conventional, married housewives in my last film, “World Trade Center” (2006) is positive and inspiring. I wonder finally at the balance of Prof. Carney’s argument, if she gives Alexander his due for the enormous respect he generally displayed for women, including his mother. This policy, atypically, extended to his own men when they committed sexual crimes against Asian women.

Professor Thomas Harrison at Cambridge takes up the William Tarn vs. Ernest Badian debate, but I’m less interested in this heavily-trod aspect of the story as I don’t think it can be answered, nor need be. The response is in what Alexander did, and not his motives, which I suspect were something like most of ours: highly ambivalent, at times glorious, at times wretched. I sometimes feel professional historians, generally apart from the human give and take of the marketplace, expect too much from their leaders -- requiring them to act from abstract principles in a world harsh with chaos, greed and infighting. We can certainly say in Alexander’s defense that he kept the expedition marching eastward for 7 more years after Babylon, with a greatness of vision that could

motivate a 120,000-man army. By leading from the front and sharing the burdens of his men, he showed himself above the comfort lines of materialism, and as a known foe of official corruption, he set high standards by punishing those found guilty of stealing, raping, plundering (including his school friend Eumenes). From all accounts written of Alexander, we see time and again, his great passion, pain and self-torture in incidents such as the murder of Cleitus, the burning of Persepolis, the mutiny in India, the kissing of Bagoas in front of his men, and the bestowing of official acceptance on Asian men and womenfolk. There is no ancient ruler, outside of legend, that I have ever heard commit such potentially self-incriminating actions. This is, of course, one of the reasons his name continues to endure – who was ever remotely like him? ‘In the doing, always in the doing’, Alexander.

Conquest is also a form of evolution. If Alexander had a smaller vision, he would’ve retreated long before to Babylon and consolidated his empire. He would’ve brought his mother, his sister and his entourage to the Persian Court. He would’ve made a stronger, more patient effort to combine Macedonian and Persian custom. This unification of cultures would’ve been the lifetime challenge for any emperor, and would’ve certainly changed the course of history. Why did he not?

I see Alexander more as explorer, like many others of such a nature, not quite knowing what’s going to come up on the horizon, yet boldly reaching for the new electrical charge of change. He stayed in motion until the end, and never returned to his Rome, London, Paris, Berlin, or Mongolia, as other conquerors have. He comes across in many ways as a man who was making it up as he went along -- from Babylon through Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and back to Babylon -- where in the end, he remained unsatisfied, dreaming of his expedition to the West. I would call him not an imperialist as present fashion would have it, but rather a ‘proto-man’, an enlightened monarch naturally in search of one land, one world -- the unity, so to speak, of the womb. Given that Alexander might’ve had a longer lifetime to develop this experiment, his empire might’ve yielded perhaps six or seven centers -- such as Babylon, Alexandria, Athens, Carthage, Rome, South Spain, a world with nerve centers that supposes, to a surprising

degree, the global world centers we have today – but with one world government, centered on enlightened monarchy, or, barring that, some form of governing body.

In unconsciously pursuing this ‘one world’ concept, under the guise of a personal quest, the Alexander of the drama we created would have to be a man who believed he was the right force to bring the world into a greater sense of unification and prosperity, that he was a step in the evolutionary process. And given the cataclysms possible, I do think Alexander ruled extraordinarily well for 12 years over men, both noble and bestial, in a social fabric that not only maintained itself, but greatly expanded in terms of culture, scientific discovery, and economic progress. It’s so easy to dismiss this great effort, I think too easy, to declare it broken after 12 years of rule. But can we say it really broke apart? Even if dissolved in four parts, the basic communal energies remained in place, and his creation culminated shortly, within 150 years, in the burgeoning Roman Empire.

These and other points in the essays are fascinating to debate, but I cannot address them here in greater detail, nor can I re-shoot, yet I am unable to let the film go from my consciousness. As a result, I’ve worked this past period to complete a third version of “Alexander” comprised of 2 acts and 1 intermission, which will be released worldwide on digital video in mid-2007 at a three and a half hour length. This version is not meant for theatrical projection, under which model at best two shows a day could be seated, which means less turnover and less ancillary sales to theater exhibitors, which makes this running time economically unfeasible for the present system. The film represents my final version, as it will contain all the essential footage we shot. I don’t know how many filmmakers have been given the opportunity to make three versions of the same film, partly, no doubt, because of the success of video and DVD sales in the world. But I felt if I didn’t do it now, with the energy and memory I still have for the subject, it would never quite be the same again. For me, this is the complete “Alexander”, and even if I am 2 years late in delivering it, it’s not really a question of right or wrong, but as in any experiment with the unknown, one of trial and error. Flaws and all, I’ve arrived at the clearest interpretation I can offer.

We begin the film now with a radical structure change, adhering to an earlier draft of the script, with Alexander's death leading to Ptolemy's memories, leading directly to the Battle of Gaugamela, which now kicks off the film in the first 10 minutes. This battle between East and West was epic in determining the course of history, and shows Alexander at his best.

The earlier version -- showing the young boy's growth, sowing the seeds of the man before we'd ever seen him -- I found too conventional in hindsight. These same scenes take on a heightened meaning when seen on the backside of his victory at Gaugamela -- with moments such as Olympias teaching her child the ways of the snake and the overcoming of fear.

These boyhood themes climax in the underground cave at Pella when Alexander tells his father, Philip (Val Kilmer), that one day he too will exist alongside the mythic heroes drawn on the cave walls. At which point, we return to the present-time narrative with Alexander at 25 -- emperor of the greatest empire yet seen -- entering the gates of Babylon. From there, we plunge on into the darker sides of his human nature.

Dr. Verity Platt, abetted by Professor Nikoloutsos and Dr. Joanna Paul, describes the film's psychological heart as a family tragedy, which adheres to the classical Greek drama of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Dr. Platt points to the 'id' of Alexander in the scene with the young boy and his one-eyed father in the cave scene. As Robin Lane Fox pointed out, there is no evidence whatever for the existence of these caves -- they are a dramatist's imagination -- although they're not inconceivable. The scene was cut several different ways, painfully, to conform to a theatrical length of three hours, but by so doing, a certain rhythm and background to the film was lost. I think this was a crucial misdirection on my part, as these ancient myths are little known to most modern folk -- so in the upcoming version, the caves play out in the order in which they were written; and in allowing the scene to run its natural length I believe a greater realization comes to us of how Alexander was built from equal parts of Achilles, Oedipus, Herakles, Jason, Prometheus, -- and that chilling mother for all time, Medea, an unfair caricature to some, but nonetheless, an enduring one.

In expressing to his father his desire to be remembered on cave walls like these, Alexander continues the quest of the royal Macedonian boy carrying in his genes the glory and torture of the heroes he cannot yet understand, and to which end he becomes one of the greatest Greek tragic heroes of all. To this day, few scholars have truly given Alexander the full credit of his imaginative achievement -- that he outperformed his favored hero, Achilles, and in eerie similarity, by following Hephaistion to an early grave, as Achilles did Patroclus, gave up long life for great glory, . Yet we somehow accept Achilles more readily, as he comes from an older time and through the mythical voice of Homer. One of the realities in front of us which we so often fail to see, blinded as we are by our limitations of time and place, and quick in our pride to condemn the overachiever who challenges preconceptions of mind, body and time, is that Alexander acted out the similar effects of all these myths in his own life! And in doing so, in a realistic and non-mythic narrative, Alexander stands alone; no other man of historical action -- Napoleon, Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, Eisenhower, Hitler, Stalin, Mao -- comes close to Alexander in either their glory or failure. With his bloody murders and tragedies, not only does Alexander give us great history, he gives us great drama, as well as everlasting mystery.

Why in these two and half thousand years have so few tried, much less succeeded, in making this dramatic tale workable in a 3-5 act structure? Certainly many of the included Professors have acknowledged the complexity of dramatizing this life. Dr. Paul perhaps goes to the nut of it in my mind by reminding us of Aristotle's 'Poetics', which calls not for the single hero, but the single action to unite the drama of disparate themes (murder, revenge, victory, love, loss, etc). I'm hoping this third version of the film finally finds that focus. In any case, allow me on paper to follow the lead given by Dr. Paul.

In that cave in Pella, Philip brings the full weight of his Greek classical pessimism to bear on his son's idealism (... "No man or woman can grow too powerful or beautiful without disaster befalling"). This one-eyed cyclops brings us back to the archaic age of Titans and Olympians when fathers ate their sons, and sons murdered their fathers, and committed incest with their mothers. In the new version, Philip has the time to tell the full story of

the Titans' ashes mixed with human dust by Zeus in some version of cosmic black humor. He implies that the human race, akin to Garden of Eden tales, is cursed from its inception. The father, in Dr. Platt's analogy, becomes the great 'No', who slams the door on Alexander's fate. This becomes increasingly manifest when Olympias later warns Alexander, at 19, of the risks presented him by Philip's newborn son by another wife, and that it's Alexander's fate to become another Parmenion to his emperor father. Thus in the cave, the primal conflict of Alexander's life is set in motion -- the war with his father, which as Dr. Platt points out, plays out even after Philip's murder in the patricidal conscience of Alexander when he sees the ghost of his wronged father before he murders Cleitus.

Befitting the power of his father, young Alexander is introduced in the cave to the eagle of Zeus, who signifies divine favor, and in the picking out of Prometheus' liver, divine punishment -- both of which Alexander will duly suffer. As we see that eagle come and go through the film, it will become, like his father, a motif of Alexander's destiny working itself out. Fear will be the enemy in Alexander's life. The wooden image of Phobus is what he prays to on the eve of Gaugamela -- "Conquer your fear and you will conquer death", he tells his assembled troops before the battle. To the end of his life, Alexander strived greatly to overcome these fears, including the one Greek tragedy is generally based on -- father and mother.

In the cave then, we discover what is subconscious to Philip and unconscious to Alexander. In this ancient mix of the dust of titan and human lies the madness at the heart of the human DNA -- something left over from our reptile brain, frozen in such fear that it's no wonder Philip drank a strong Greek wine to drive these furies from his mind. How condescending of modern critics to refer to Philip as a drunkard. Who wouldn't drink surrounded by such fears! What are modern tranquilizers but similar bulwarks against the modern furies? Alexander is the one who will ride out these fears to find the 'new man' Philip hints at.

In sharp contrast to this world, there is an enlightened Greek classical look to Ptolemy's Alexandria 60 years later, with its clean architectural lines, numerous scrolls, well-proportioned statues of Olympian gods; this entire 'modern' interlude, following upon the cave scene, signals reason, intellect, and culture. Ptolemy thus takes us in another direction, into the future, to ponder a subtheme -- the meaning and sanctity of history. This confused many people who wanted a clean narrative line, but in the end, this subtheme ties very much into the single action proposed by Aristotle (i.e. was Alexander corrupted by his action or not?). Ptolemy raises for me the issue of what is history -- oral, mythological? Because Ptolemy dictates his vision to his scribes, are we to believe it's more real because it's written? The question grows on us as Ptolemy himself, in the last scene, undermines his own version of Alexander's history. Professor Solomon points to this in his understanding of the importance of Ptolemy and the role he plays as a potential co-conspirator in Alexander's death. To complete the idea, we now acknowledge at the end of the film -- something from which I retreated in the original editing -- the disappearance of Ptolemy's memoirs in the great fires that destroyed the Library.

Part of the effort in this third version is an expansion, rather than reduction, of the much-criticized prologue and epilogue of the older Ptolemy. Sometimes more is better, as there is a rhythm in the clean narrative line of a story that when truncated loses its full coherence. Allowing Anthony Hopkins' sonorous voice to work its way into our mind is a key to understanding this story. And he is a mellifluous actor, sublime in his older man's relaxation in the role; in his expanded form, he frames and unites the new structure.

It's old Ptolemy who understands the true significance of Alexander's ring, which, as a younger man, he witnesses in the opening scene of the film, falling from the king's dying hand. Now aged, Ptolemy stares at the same cracked ring on his finger, and muses on the fact that it belongs to "the true heir to the Empire", Alexander and Roxane's 13 year-old son, who was murdered by Cassander, and thus robbed unfairly by history. And it's with a similar but hardened regret that Ptolemy now wears this ring, perhaps troubled by the feeling he's betrayed Alexander's legitimacy and contributed to the fracturing of his empire -- for which he is now making amends in writing his forgiving history. Among

possible crimes of self-interest, Ptolemy could be accused of seizing Egypt, the empire's richest province, for himself, hijacking the body of Alexander to Alexandria, legitimizing his own rule as pharaoh, and as chief of Alexander's bodyguard at the time of his death, would be complicit as much, if not more, as Alexander in Philip's murder. If I'd pushed this parallel more dramatically (by showing Ptolemy actually plotting the murder with others), it would've resonated more strongly with the audience, but at the same time it would've been the lesser history.

In Professor Nikoloustsos's empathetic essay on Alexander's emotional relationships to Hephaestion, Bagoas and Roxane, the ring, as given him on Roxane's wedding night in Bactria by a besotted Hephaestion ('I'll always think of you as the sun, Alexander... And I pray your dream will shine on all men'), becomes a symbol of homoerotic idealism and platonic love between men that Aristotle earlier described as the basis of the city-state. Given our modern obsession with sex, the true beauty of this passage of the ring was misunderstood as a token only of a homosexual liaison -- a pity, as small minds do not seek to understand the largeness of Alexander and Hephaestion, whose vision came to be united as one. In fact, I never thought of Alexander and Hephaestion as carnal lovers after adolescence. There is a fictionalized scene at the edge of Alexander's tent on the eve of the battle of Gaugamela, when Hephaestion subtly seeks entry, but Alexander refuses, needing solitude. Later in Babylon, when a befuddled and weary Alexander asks Hephaestion to "stay with me tonight", I never thought of it as more than a nostalgia to be in each other's arms again, to succor the confused morale of Alexander after reading his mother's letter.

Alexander is, indeed, lost in Babylon. His dream is now clouded by Darius' escape to the Northeast, as well as his army's growing rapaciousness to plunder and loot the East, and return to Macedonia. Which is precisely what Alexander will not do -- in contradiction to his father's plans of revenge on the Persians. Revenge was never motive enough for Alexander. With his fiercely original mindset, the enemy was there to learn from and grow with, to build upon, and win over; and in so doing, to change -- or let's say, for those who prefer Persian to Greek rule, 'improve upon' -- an empire built on a corruption and cruelty repellent to most Greeks.

Yet now on this balcony in Babylon the new “Emperor of Asia’ sharing his vision with Hephaestion, has presumably achieved all the glory he dreamt of on those cave walls of Pella. Yet Alexander remains deeply unsatisfied (“...I see the future, Hephaestion... These people need, want, to be freed...”). It is a Promethean fate to realize one’s dream so young, and then again to find the dream is never static, but ephemeral and ongoing. Cannot even Alexander’s worst detractors give the man credit for this astounding energy and purpose? The man did not loot the East, but sought to create something, and in the nature of his improvised actions, seemed to be building towards a goal of binding East and West together; the man himself was in the end married to three Eastern princesses, and in promoting such marriages among his own generals and soldiers, seemed to understand that through generosity, more breeds more, and less, less. He didn’t need to state there could be a unified world -- as Professor Harrison might have wanted for the record -- because the action lay in the doing, not the saying. It was always in this realm that Alexander functioned best. True, there were Phoenician sailors, traders, and hardy travelers of all ilks who wandered the world before Alexander, but they were hardly Microsofts or General Electrics or Toyotas, who could lead the way. Alexander became, by accretion, the first multi-nationalist . His was an idea so vast and unknown in its time, that given the enormous diversity of the present world, his could only have existed at the beginning of recorded time.

This idealism naturally requires an heir to succeed Alexander in order for empire to become dynasty; it’s fatally ironic that Roxane, mistaking the ring’s significance and reducing it to an item of Hephaestion’s lust, throws it violently out of their wedding bed. Hephaestion is far more accepting of Roxane than she of Hephaestion, who she sees in an illogical, archaic way as a biological threat to her and her son’s supremacy. There is an additional adversarial scene between Roxane and Hephaestion in the new version, but it is the ring scene in the wedding chamber at Bactria that seals Hephaestion’s fate at the hands of Roxane. Of course, this is my conjecture as a dramatist, perhaps as irrelevant as my harem fantasies, but let us not forget that Hephaestion died young, as suddenly and mysteriously as Alexander; nor should we underrate him as one of Alexander’s best and

most trusted generals, sent on numerous missions of import. It'd only be human nature to expect that in a closed society of ambitious Macedonian generals, combining large amounts of testosterone and wealth, that Hephaistion's insider status would be envied and hated by those who'd want either to take his power, or dissuade Alexander from further expeditions, in order for them to actually enjoy their wealth. If there was conspiracy behind Hephaistion's death -- and subsequently Alexander's -- logic points to these generals, among them Cassander, Pediccas, Ptolemy, Craterus, Antigonous and the absent Antipater and Cassander. And certainly Roxane had supporters among these factions, and from the ruthless manner in which she disposed of Stateira and her unborn heir after Alexander's death, we can only surmise that Roxane had become a strong and willful woman, such as Olympias. She cannot be dismissed as a suspect without motive in the death of Hephaistion.

When Hephaistion dies, he reminds Alexander unselfishly, given his own dire state -- "You won men's hearts... But how beautiful a myth it was, Alexander... They all did [reach and fall] -- Achilles, Prometheus -- in whose company you now stand and shine, Alexander", which is all, in truth, what Alexander wanted as a youth. How true to life that now Alexander can no longer recognize himself or set a limit to his inexorable ambitions -- to explore Arabia, North Africa, Italy, the Gates of Gibraltar. He cannot, tragically, garner satisfaction from his feats because he must go on. And thus, sadly, he can only feel the brokenness of his dream, his sense that he's closer to the end than the beginning. When Hephaistion dies, as with Patroclus and Achilles, the wheels are clearly set in motion for Alexander's own death within eight months.

In the new version of Alexander's death, I've included a scene between Bagoas and Alexander, alone at night where we hear their simple, final expressions of devotion to each other. Bagoas appeals to Alexander in another light, that really of a third species, the transsexual, which Alexander, ever curious, explored and came to love. There was also an introductory scene with Bagoas at the harem, which I cut from the film for fear of alienating masculine audiences. I was clearly pushing the mass audience's tolerance for Hephaistion as it was, but with Bagoas, we risked turning the entire film into a debacle. A large part of this has to do with the tremendous amount of hostility the eunuch received at

the early screenings we held for Warner Brothers' personnel. Having been attacked, not necessarily justly, for so many excesses in the past, I stuttered in my path; I think I lost heart. But as I don't see this issue as either victory or loss, but more as a function of time and fate, I am happy to have the chance to restore it in this third pass. Allowing Bagoas to play himself out, even in its most awkward moments, some may understand Bagoas truly loved Alexander; their last scene together chills me when Bagoas cries, as it shows how deeply Alexander was loved by Bagoas -- as much as any woman could've loved him. It shows Alexander as he was -- 'loved by all'. At the same time, I believe Hephaestion was Alexander's true soulmate, as evidenced by his monumental funeral games, which I very much wanted to shoot, but which we could not afford.

In his last moments on earth, Alexander reaches up to embrace the eagle of Zeus flying out of the Persian fan above his bed; in truth, the tiny fly-like image on the fan is the *faravahar* that represented the divinity of the Zoroastrian god of light, Ahura Mazda. In Alexander's fevered imagination, the *faravahar* blends with Zeus' eagle -- both divine symbols of Eastern and Western religions that merge into the Alexandrine One -- and as he dies, the ring he's offering up to his divine ideal crashes to the floor, broken like his empire, into pieces. As Prometheus did, Alexander has ascended to the lofty heights between man and the gods, and with his tortured (poisoned?) Promethean death, he passes on the gift of 'fire' (civilization) to the next generation. Thus, to repeat, the ring is representative of more than this 'heir' Ptolemy speaks of, and more than the love between Alexander and Hephaestion (no rosebud here). The ring for me is the eternal symbol of that beautiful Greek ideal -- the 'love of man' -- the unity of that man, the dream of One World, which is and has been repeatedly shattered. Alexander's dream, as Prometheus', will live on in other forms, including our movie in the early 21st Century -- and beyond -- but for now, as with all men, it seems Alexander has reached the end. As Ptolemy concludes, "all men reach and fall...reach and fall".

Yet viewing Alexander's life through a more optimistic prism, I feel he died a tired, but content man. Dr. Paul, in pointing to Aristotle's 'single action', has opened my eyes to what I missed at the time. It was there certainly in my subconscious from the beginning, struggling to be heard, but its implications frightened me. The theme, the main action of

this piece, was always murder -- the murder of Philip – and whether Alexander was involved or not. But, in hindsight, I think I subconsciously avoided going to the bottom of this murky pond because I was scarred from the numerous personal attacks on me as a conspiracy theorist in “JFK” and “Nixon”. If I had admitted this was a movie about Alexander’s possible conspiratorial involvement in that murder, it would’ve been at great risk to the fortunes of an expensive movie. I truly feared the movie would’ve been murdered in its cradle, as had a previous project of mine on Martin Luther King, where I was trying to illustrate a man’s character under pressure rather than the possibility of a conspiracy in the murder.

If Alexander did knowingly murder his father -- which I doubt -- he is despicable, and I have far less respect for this character, and have done history a disservice in misinterpreting him. But there still remains the strong possibility that Alexander did know of the murder through his mother. And even if he did not know of it, he was, as I tried to show in their final scene together, sorely compromised by blood. After this meeting with Olympias, he never saw her again. Was this because she was in some way involved? Certainly her public behavior was remarked upon by many when she flaunted her husband’s death – reason in my mind for her not to have been involved. But certainly, bearing in perspective that the crime of patricide is one of the most heinous and condemned in Greek tragedies, Alexander assumed the throne, not unlike most Macedonian kings, under a suspicious and much contested light.

It’s certainly possible that Pausanius did murder Philip, who had many enemies in the clan-based society of Macedonia. He also had fierce foes in Greece, and it’s quite logical that Darius, with Persian gold, contributed to his death in some way to abort Philip’s planned invasion. Furthermore, it’s possible Olympias was involved with either Greek or Persian factions, or both. For her, much was at stake -- a new son and heir had just been born of pure Macedonian blood; she was still an outsider to the local power base of nobles, and Alexander was only half-Macedonian, and indeed, if he was the son of Zeus as she claimed, then he was not Macedonian at all! Nor did Olympias waste time disposing of Eurydice and the newborn heir after the assassination. Her ruthlessness is evident, but did she actually involve herself in the murder of Philip? The behavior of

Alexander in their bedroom scenes makes it clear he's riddled with this doubt. At the least, he must wonder how can she gloat so openly over his father's death. The essence of it is that Alexander is ascending to an ambivalent throne – but one which he wants badly, as his mother makes see.

We have here the potential for a startlingly original Greek tragedy -- mother kills father; son, loving both, assumes throne in bad conscience, which haunts him till he redeems his honor late in life. Unlike Oedipus, the protagonist in the end may be ambushed by the past, but he overcomes it. I don't know offhand of any parallel Greek play with this storyline, and this is what infused me with the passion to try for these parameters. Thus all Alexander's actions, as played out by Colin Farrell, are based on this profound insecurity over his throne. In the campaign tent scene before Gaugamela, there is a discussion among the generals wherein Parmenion questions whether Persian gold did actually pay for Philip's death. Watch closely Alexander's face in reaction to this and you'll see that insecurity. (I've read accounts to the effect that in his first great Persian battle at Issus, Alexander blundered in his tactics, somewhat like George Bush Jr. trying to show up his father in modern Iraq, by overestimating the power of his cavalry to turn the tide of battle, and it was Parmenion's sturdiness that saved the day.)

We see this insecurity again in Alexander's reaction to his mother's letter on the balcony at Babylon with Hephaestion (... "My father thought me weak, my mother divine – which am I, Hephaestion? Weak or divine?"). This is a key question. Certainly the Greek concept of birth was opaque, allowing Alexander, who had such little physical resemblance to his father, to wonder. This all comes to a culmination when Alexander faces the elephants in India. Movie audiences take for granted far too easily heroism in film -- and thus in history. They expect it, which is a shame, as we repeatedly undercut its true meaning. In this climactic scene, we have Alexander, practically alone in the heart of the battle, taking on the Indian king astride an elephant twice the size of his great horse, Bucephalus. Alexander's action is a classic heroic sacrifice, meant to motivate his lagging men into action -- as was historically true at the battle of Multan, when this suicidal heroism in fact turned the tide of battle in favor of the Greeks, but led to Alexander's most grievous wound. We should remember that Alexander prided himself

on never having been defeated in battle, and for this record of invincibility, he seemed to be willing to die. Yet there seems even more at stake to me.

It's an amazing moment in the film as he transcends the normal limits of life, and with an arrow piercing his lung, what is the last thing, the very last thing, that crosses his dying mind? In dramatic terms, we suggest it's his last moments in Pella, years before, with his mother arguing the assassination of his father, and whether he is or is not complicit because of his mother's hate? Can he bring her to justice, as Orestes did his mother? What a horrible fate twist of fate to choose from -- matricide or patricide. The answer is never made clear. And yet when she says "Great power, wealth, conquest -- all your desires -- the world is yours! Take it!", he does. And because of this dishonorable desire in himself for power at any price, we're suggesting Alexander will always feel complicit.

Recovering with great willpower from his near-fatal wound in India, he gives in to his army's wishes and returns to Babylon. Yet as the ashen Alexander is put on a horse for all his men to behold, he sees the pale, fleshy shade of his father, Philip, staring down at him from a cliff of cheering soldiers. The ghost nods to him, as if with final approval of his kingship. It is as Philip promised long ago in the cave in Pella -- "a King is not born, Alexander, he's made -- by steel and suffering!". Alexander has truly ascended to his father's station and become the true king.

It is then, after long absence, the eagle of Zeus returns to the sky above. Alexander, who has nearly died in this battle, shines again -- though briefly. I'd like to believe that the violation (murder?) of Philip is expiated from Alexander's soul. And as a man now wholly free of the fear (of father and mother) that has governed his long journey from home, Alexander returns to his death (foretold) in Babylon.

I began my own journey on this long ago when I first read Mary Renault's version of Alexander, and it brings me to very a special place in my life. It's going to be very hard to repeat that feeling each one of us on the film shared of being in the presence of such a great person for such a long time. He made us better than ourselves. I hope this film can, in some way, be a memorial to the memory and greatness of his achievement. I don't

think this film will ever fit any single category of film made in Hollywood. It ends with so many ambiguities, and it was so long ago. It still leaves my mind excited with that sensation of a past lived by people like us, who passed on a fire of memory of a time when young men could dream of taking and holding power, and truly changing the course of the world! 'In the doing, always in the doing' will ring for me as Alexander's theme, his 'cri de coeur'. And if he leaves us in the end with more questions than answers, his are grand questions well worth asking -- and his achievements glorious ideals to live by.

Oliver Stone
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