# Did Alexander Read Cratinus' *Eunidae* on his Deathbed?

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The common sight in ancient and modern works
of the philosophical Alexander should be enriched
by the appreciation, especially in Plutarch,
of the bookishly literary Alexander.[1]

WE ARE WHAT WE READ. Alexander was a great commander because he read Homer's *Iliad* and kept it under the pillow, at least according to Plutarch.[2] Later in the same passage Plutarch lists the king's reading of history, tragedy, and dithyramb, which was all supplied by the royal treasurer Harpalus. The list's rich variety of books, prized possessions of the world's richest treasury, portrays Alexander not only as a connoisseur of the finest Greek literature, but also as educated well beyond the established canon. Modern speculation on the king's reading lists goes even further. Some argue that Alexander's Persian policies were inspired by reading Xenophon, his fellow Anabasist and biographer of everyone's favourite Persian monarch, Cyrus II (r. 559–530 B.C.).[3] Ancient and

[1] C. Brunelle, "Alexander's Persian Pillow and Plutarch's Cultured Commander," *CJ* 112 (2017) 257–278, at 267.

[2] Plut. *Alex.* 8.2–3 citing Onesicritus *BNJ* 134 F 38 (Whitby). Plut. *Alex.* 8.2 also refers to Alexander's nature as ἦν δὲ καὶ φύσει φιλόλογος καὶ φιλομαθὴς καὶ φιλαναγνώστης. Cf. T. S. Brown "Alexander's Book Order (Plut. *Alex.* 8)," *Historia* 16 (1969) 359–368.

[3] For a basic summary of the scholarly debate see K. McGroarty, "Did Alexander the Great read Xenophon?" *Hermathena* 180 (2006) 105–124, who argues that Alexander did not read Xenophon. *Contra* C. Kegerreis, "Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* among Alexander's Lost Historians," *AncW* 46 (2015) 134–161, who argues that the historians at Alexander's court read Xenophon.

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modern writers thus appreciate Alexander as a cultured general because we read and value the same sort of books. We want our leaders to be educated, or at least to recognize the authority of a literary classic.

Unfortunately, the romantic picture of this kingly bookishness shatters when we consider the context in which Plutarch was writing. Competitive bibliolatry was the standard among his contemporaries. In the imperial Greek east, the extreme book culture of the Second Sophistic loomed large.[4] It is into this context that Plutarch's remarks on Alexander's bibliophily should be inserted. Christopher Brunelle made this case convincingly, arguing that we need to study how Alexander's *paideia* aligns with the culture that describes it.[5] For example, Plutarch's anecdote about the king's Homeric headrest unveils the illusion, for no one would sleep comfortably on top of the huge stacks of papyrus scrolls required for a full copy of the *Iliad*.[6] The story must rather be taken to represent Alexander as a kind of book hoarder, a scholarly kind of patron who tries hard to be an intellectual. This image would certainly be familiar to the peers of Plutarch. Plutarch's *Alexander* thus produces a culturally appropriate image of the protagonist, just as Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia* appropriated Cyrus for other purposes and a Greek readership in the fourth century.

In this article, I wish to explore another attestation of the bibliophile Alexander. As already said, the topic is not commonplace in modern studies, and so we may study it to exemplify

[4] For the many literary aspects of this contested period of Greek literature see D. S. Richter and W. A. Johnson, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic* (Oxford 2017).

[5] Brunelle, *CJ* 112 (2017) 265–266.

[6] Brunelle, *CJ* 112 (2017) 259, gives the huge measurements for 16,000 lines of epic poetry in scroll form. The case is almost an inverted version of H. C. Andersen's *Princess and the Pea*, for it is simply not possible to rest comfortably on the stacks proposed by Plutarch's story. See Plut. *Alex*. 26.1–2 for an elaboration of the pillow story with a casket, κιβώτιον, that must presumably have gone under the pillow(!).

some of the historiographical issues in studying the rich discourse on Alexander (or 'Alexandrology') across ancient literature.[7] As the pivot for discussion, I turn to Plutarch's contemporary, Ptolemy Chennus of Alexandria, author of a *Kainē Historia*, referred to by the *Suda* as the *Paradoxos Historia*.[8] In this strange 'history', Ptolemy records that attendants discovered one of Cratinus of Athens' comedies, the *Eunidae*, by the head of the dead monarch. We know that the king died abed in Babylon in the summer of 323 B.C., but no other author records that enjoying an obscure piece of old Athenian comedy was his final act. Ptolemy's report, however dubious, calls for close scrutiny precisely because of its singularity. What follows is then a study of how literary traditions emerge and interact.

1. *Ptolemy between fact and fiction*

Despite his contemporaneity with many of the Alexandrophile intellectuals of the late first/early second century, Ptolemy Chennus is rarely utilized in modern studies of Alexander.[9] This may be the result of the wealth of material available elsewhere, as well as Ptolemy's chance survival. He shares the fate of many other ancient authors who can only be read in Photius' ninth-century summary. There is, however, renewed interest in the author as exemplified by the first book-length study of his *oeuvre*. In it, Beth Hartley builds on previous arguments to promote

[7] For the term see P. Briant, *Alexandre: exégèse des lieux communs* (Paris 2016). Cf. G. Wirth, *Der Weg in die Vergessenheit: zum Schicksal des antiken Alexanderbildes* (Vienna 1993).

[8] For Photius' summary of Ptolemy see *Bibl.* cod. 190 (III 186–222 Henry). Cf. the entry on Ptolemy in the *Suda* π 3037 (Adler).

[9] And this is despite the fact that the Alexandrian Ptolemy, son of Hephaistion, or Chennus, 'the Quail', has a supremely attractive name for a modern historian of Alexander. See e.g. E. Koulakiotis, *Genese und Metamorphosen des Alexandermythos im Spiegel der griechischen nichthistoriographischen Überlieferung* (Konstanz 2006), who provides the fullest study of the later ancient Alexander tradition outside of the five major historians. Cf. the massive collection of reception-related papers in K. Moore (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Alexander the Great* (Leiden 2018).

Ptolemy's novel research as "a playful text that tests readers' *paideia*."[10] In this regard, the history is not unlike what we know from Aelian's *Varia Historia*, an eclectic mix of fanciful information that verges on the border of history, mythography, and scholarship.[11] The line between fiction and history was always blurry in classical antiquity, and such authors from Ptolemy's period were trying to keep their sophisticated readers interested and guessing.

If Ptolemy is toying with his readers, we should approach the text from the assumption that everything he says either has a meaningful relationship with something that was actually true, at least in the Greek literary tradition, or it bears some relation to bogus information that someone else had provided.[12] The task of determining which is which and what is being played on is even more challenging because of Photius' chronological distance from Ptolemy. Photius may have glossed over specific

[10] B. Hartley, *Novel Research: Fiction and Authority in Ptolemy Chennus* (diss. Exeter 2014) 10. Cf. Al. Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (Oxford 2004) 134–163.

[11] C. Meliadò, "Mythography," in F. Montanari et al. (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Greek Scholarship* (Leiden 2015) 1057–1089, at 1088–1089.

[12] Ptolemy's bogus facts and fakes are discussed in K. Ní Mheallaigh, *Reading Fiction with Lucian: Fakes, Freaks, and Hyperreality* (Cambridge 2014) 116–126. She contextualizes Ptolemy within the greater pseudo-scholarly games of the early imperial period, rejecting Hercher's idea of Ptolemy as a simple *Schwindelautor*—R. Hercher, "Über die Glaubwürdigkeit der *Neuen Geschichte* des Ptolemaeus Chennus," *Jahrbücher für klassische Philologie* Suppl. N.S. 1 (1856) 267–293, with M. Hose, "Ptolemaios Chennos und das Problem der *Schwindelliteratur*," in S. Heilen et al. (eds.), *In Pursuit of Wissenschaft: Festschrift für William M. Calder III* (Zurich/New York 2009) 177–196. Furthermore, Ní Mheallaigh argues that Ptolemy's work shows semblance with literary fictions by Lucian, Antonius Diogenes, Dictys, and Ps.-Plutarch *On Rivers* which, *inter alia*, happily invented author names to confer authority upon an otherwise incredible piece of information. For instance, at Ps.-Plutarch *On Rivers* 1.4 (Hydaspes) an elephant runs down a mountain to warn the Indian king Porus of Alexander's immediate approach. The animal dies once it has delivered its message, its purpose thus fulfilled. For credibility, the anonymous author refers readers to the otherwise unknown Dercyllus *On Mountains* Book 3.

wording and elaborations that would have given Ptolemy's ploy away.[13] Nevertheless, from what Photius chose to preserve, it is clear that Ptolemy made a point of playing with stereotypes, especially characters from Homer and Herodotus. He also inverted many well-known tropes from Greek literature, as is to be expected. After all, that was the bread and butter of the writers of the early imperial period.

This intellectual playfulness is on display in the passage on Alexander and Cratinus.[14] Besides this reading, Ptolemy also refers here to the deathbed reading of Demetrius of Scepsis ("Tellis' book"), Tyronichus of Chalcis ("*Diving Girls* by Alcman"), Ephialtes ("*Hybristodicae* by Eupolis"), and Seleucus I ("Hesiod's *Works and Days*"). He then mentions the final reading of famous Romans: Pompey ("Book 11 of the *Iliad*") and Cicero ("Euripides' *Medea*"). Daniel Ogden has exposed the key features of this peculiar passage in the context of the legendary Seleucus tradition.[15] He suggests that the symbolism of Hesiod's work is either related to the king's role as a city-builder or to his just demeanour. One might add the religious piety of Seleucus, re-

[13] On Photius' method see N. G. Wilson, "The Composition of Photius' *Bibliotheca*," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 451– 455; T. Hägg, "Photius at Work. Evidence from the Text of the *Bibliotheca*," *GRBS* 14 (1973) 213–222. Cf. W. T. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington 1980); A. Kaldellis, "The Byzantine Role in the Making of the Corpus of Classical Historiography," *JHS* 132 (2012) 71–85; J. L. P. Sánchez, "La Historia antigua en la Biblioteca de Focio," *Panta Rei* 2016, 87–95.

[14] Ptolemy Chennus *Strange History*, Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 190.151a: ὅτι τελευτήσαντος Δημητρίου τοῦ Σκηψίου τὸ βιβλίον Τέλλιδος πρὸς τῇ κεφαλῇ αὐτοῦ εὑρέθη· τὰς δὲ Κολυμβώσας Ἀλκμάνους πρὸς τῇ κεφαλῇ Τυρονίχου τοῦ Χαλκιδέως εὑρεθῆναί φασι, τοὺς δ' Ὑβριστοδίκας Εὐπόλιδος πρὸς τῇ Ἐφιάλτου, τοὺς δὲ Εὐνίδας Κρατίνου πρὸς τῇ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ βασιλέως Μακεδόνων, τὰ δ' Ἔργα καὶ τὰς Ἡμέρας Ἡσιόδου πρὸς τῇ τοῦ Σελεύκου τοῦ Νικάτορος κεφαλῇ … ὁ δὲ Πομπήϊος ὁ Μάγνος οὐδ' εἰς πόλεμον προίοι, πρὶν ἂν τὸ λ΄ τῆς Ἰλιάδος ἀναγνώσειε, ζηλωτὴς ὢν Ἀγαμέμνονος· ὁ δὲ Ῥωμαῖος Κικέρων Μήδειαν Εὐριπίδου ἀναγινώσκων ἐν φορείῳ φερόμενος, ἀποτμηθείη τὴν κεφαλήν.

[15] D. Ogden, *The Legend of Seleucus* (Cambridge 2017) 253–259.

ferred to by the travel writer Pausanias cited in Ogden's epigraph;[16] piety is certainly a pronounced theme across Hesiod's work. Ptolemy's indication of a peaceful death for Seleucus seems perplexing since most of our sources inform us that Ptolemy Ceraunus assassinated Seleucus in Thrace.[17] An alternative literary tradition, represented by Lucian, places Seleucus' death in Babylonia, thematically appropriate with Alexander's death, and Ogden sees a similar attempt to let Seleucus die peacefully reading Hesiod in Ptolemy Chennus' text.[18] It follows that Ptolemy was clearly aware of such literary traditions and meanings. In the same spirit, we must investigate both the historical tradition and the wider literary tradition of Ptolemy's *paideia*.

2. *A genuine 'historical' tradition?*

I must concede that the historical Alexander could theoretically have read the play on his deathbed. It is possible, for Cratinus of Athens (fl. 454–423) composed his comedies a full century earlier. His fame as a comedian was and is well known, as he was one of the primary exponents of Attic comedy together with Eupolis and Aristophanes.[19] The *Eunidae* is one of his twenty-four or so works, though not the most famous. That honor goes to *Pytinē* or *Wineflask*, apparently written in response to Aristophanes' ridicule of his person.[20] And yet, there is no reason why Alexander should not read a less acclaimed work.

[16] Paus. 1.16.3: Σέλευκον δὲ βασιλέων ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα πείθομαι καὶ ἄλλως γενέσθαι δίκαιον καὶ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβῆ.

[17] See e.g. Just. *Epit*. 17.2.1–5, with extensive source collection at Ogden, *Legend of Seleucus* 20 n.55.

[18] Ogden, *Legend of Seleucus* 252–253, citing Luc. *Syr.D.* 18.

[19] D. Olson, *Broken Laughter: Select Fragments of Greek Comedy* (Oxford 2007) 408, offers a concise summary of what is known of Cratinus. The competition with Aristophanes is expounded by Z. P. Biles, *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition* (Cambridge 2011) 134–166, esp. 144–154. See in general E. Bakola, *Cratinus and the Art of Comedy* (Oxford 2010), for a full review of Cratinus' craft.

[20] For Aristophanes' dismissal see Ar. *Eq*. 526–536 = Cratinus T 11d: I. C. Storey, *Fragments of Old Comedy* I (Cambridge [Mass.]/London 2011).

Given Plutarch's description of Harpalus' exotic book list, one may consider this reading of a more obscure comedy as Ptolemy's attempt to make the king appear educated beyond the canon. Moreover, the length of Cratinus' *Eunidae* is obviously much less than the entirety of Homer's *Iliad*, and so was not too unwieldy and could be brought into bed.

The reason why it is not probable is twofold. First, as already said, Ptolemy is the only writer among all our sources of Alexander's death to mention the bedside reading.[21] This fact raises suspicion. Secondly, because of Ptolemy's readership. They, and the author himself, must have had something to hold on to, something easily tangible in the literary tradition, to appreciate and so 'get the joke'. It is simply not the case that the historical character wanted a laugh and so read a comedy; Ptolemy needed a firm frame of reference for the story that other writers would readily find stimulating. I proceed with the assumption that Ptolemy invented the story and so will provide evidence from the traditions surrounding both Alexander and Cratinus.

Ptolemy's choice of a comedy is not immediately obvious. The genre is not often associated with the king's name, except when he is the butt of the joke.[22] Only one potentially comic play is associated with Alexander's name, the controversial *Agēn* or "Commander," which Athenaeus attributes not only to Python of Catana or Byzantium, but also to Alexander himself.[23] Despite a flurry of recent studies, it remains uncertain how Alexander relates to it. We cannot say whether the historical

[21] The main texts and issues are set forth concisely in A. B. Bosworth, "Appendix P: Alexander's Death – the Poisoning Rumors," in J. Romm (ed.), *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander* (New York 2010) 407–410.

[22] See e.g. Menander frr.293 and 924 Koch, with a basic summary of the former in Plut. *Mor.* 57A. Cf. Plaut. *Mostell.* 775–777. For the *topos* see S. Müller, "'Mehr hast du getrunken als König Alexander': Alkoholsucht im antiken griechischen Diskurs," in C. Hoffstadt and R. Bernasconi (eds.), *An den Grenzen der Sucht* (Bochum/Freiburg 2009) 205–222.

[23] For the references to the problematic authorship see Ath. 50F, 586D, 595E.

Alexander commissioned the play or even saw it performed, as the context of the two fragments suggests a performance for an Athenian audience in 324 B.C.[24] In my view, Alexander probably did neither. There were, however, comedians at the Macedonian court. We hear of as many as 3000 performers for the wedding feast at Susa in 324, of which the majority were epic poets and tragedians, but some were comedians.[25] It is not clear how they fared compared to the other artists, and we know much more about the Argead taste for tragedy and epic. These genres played a key role in Argead politics and culture before and under Alexander,[26] whose own capabilities in performing Euripidean tragedy were experienced by credible eye-witnesses.[27]

Ptolemy Chennus also engages with this artistic representation of the court.[28] Photius informs us that the second book of the

[24] S. Müller, *Die Argeaden* (Paderborn 2016) 59. For discussion of the *Agōn* fragments see P. O'Sullivan and C. Collard, *Euripides: Cyclops and Major Fragments of Greek Satyric Drama* (Liverpool 2013) 448–455; A. Kotlińska-Toma, *Hellenistic Tragedy* (London/New York 2015) 113–123. Cf. F. Pownall, "The Role of Greek Literature at the Argead Court," in S. Müller et al. (eds.) *The History of the Argeads* (Wiesbaden 2017) 215–229, at 223 n.77.

[25] For a list of artist names see Ath. 538B–539A citing Chares of Mytilene *BNJ* 125 F 4 (Müller) = F 17 in S. Cagnazzi, *Carete di Mitilene, testimoniaze e frammenti* (Rome 2015), with detailed discussion at L. A. Tritle, "Artists and Soldiers, Friends and Enemies," in W. Heckel and L. A. Tritle, (eds.), *Alexander the Great – A New History* (Malden 2009) 121–140, at 125–126. Cf. Diod. 17.110.7–8, Arr. *Anab*. 7.14.1.

[26] See Pownall, in *The History of the Argeads* 224–226, for a study of Greek literature in the context of Argead ideology.

[27] Our earliest testimony to Alexander's display of Greek artistry is Aeschin. *In Tim*. 168–169, discussed by E. Carney, *King and Court in Ancient Macedonia: Rivalry, Treason and Conspiracy* (Swansea 2015) 192. Nicoboule, a shadowy presence at Alexander's court, saw the king act out a whole scene from Euripides' *Andromeda*: Ath. 537D citing Nicoboule *BNJ* 127 F 2 (Sheridan).

[28] The artistic at court is part of a wider *topos* discussed at S. Müller, "The Artistic King: Reflections on a *topos* in Second Sophistic Historiography," in

*Strange History* closed with some rather remarkable notices, such as what song Alexander often sang, as well as the funeral chant he wrote.[29] Unfortunately, Photius did not find it prudent to preserve what these songs actually were. The first one clearly had a Homeric theme,[30] because Ptolemy begins the passage by putting an adapted verse of the *Odyssey* into the mouth of Alexander. In the vocative the king addresses Proteas, a notorious drinking companion,[31] and orders him in the imperative to drink wine now that he has eaten human flesh. The line is a play on the part of the Cyclops-episode in which Odysseus repeatedly offers Polyphemus wine after the monster has eaten of Odysseus' crew, and the Cyclops imbibes copious amounts of wine before he disgorges it in his drunken stupor.[32] Presumably, Alexander is challenging Proteas to consume as much alcohol during their contest. Their bouts were infamous.[33] One contemporary writer, Ephippus of Olynthus, even claimed that a drinking contest between the two proved fatal for Alexander.[34]

S. Müller et al. (eds.), *Ancient Historiography on War and Empire* (Oxford/Philadelphia 2017) 250–261. Cf. D. Restani, *Musica per governare. Alessandro, Adriano, Teoderico* (Ravenna 2004) 11–29.

[29] *Strange History*, Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 190.148a4–9: τίνος ἐστὶ τὸ ὑπ' Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Φιλίππου εἰρημένον "Πρωτέα, τῇ, πίε οἶνον, ἐπεὶ φάγες ἀνδρόμεα κρέα" (adapting *Od.* 9.347) καὶ πολλὰ περὶ Πρωτέου· ποίαν ᾠδὴν εἶχεν ἐν συνηθείᾳ Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ τίνος ἦν ποίημα, εἰς τίνα ἔγραψεν ἐπικήδειον ὁ αὐτὸς Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Φιλίππου. ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοῦ β′ κεφάλαια βιβλίου.

[30] Cf. Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 331C, who argues that Alexander would have selected Hom. *Il.* 9.189 as his favourite line.

[31] W. Heckel, *Who's Who in the Age of Alexander the Great* (Oxford 2006) 233, s.v. Proteas.

[32] The canonical account, Hom. *Od.* 9.347–374, is summarized in Apollod. *Epit.* 7.6. See also Ar. *Plut.* 290–301, Lycoph. *Alex.* 659–661, Hyg. *Fab.* 125.4, Ov. *Met.* 14.210–212, Prop. 2.33b.31–32.

[33] Ael. *VH.* 12.26: Πρωτέας ὁ Λανίκης μὲν υἱός, Ἀλεξάνδρου δὲ τοῦ βασιλέως σύντροφος. καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος λέγεται πλεῖστον πιεῖν ἀνθρώπων. Cf. Ath. 150A citing the third-century Hippolochus of Macedon.

[34] Ath. 434A-B citing Ephippus of Olynthus *BNJ* 126 F 3 (Prandi).

3. *Alexander, Cratinus, and Dionysus: the case for comparison*

Heavy drinking makes a much more fitting literary parallel to Cratinus himself. The comedian was a reputed drinker, as evidenced by the oft-cited line, "you could never create anything great by drinking water."[35] He made a point of this by starring in his own *Wineflask* in which Comedy wanted to divorce him because he had repeated love-affairs with *Methē*, Drunkenness. This self-presentation was widely accepted. His rival notes that he died at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War apparently because he could not stand that a full jar of wine should be smashed.[36] His drinking lingered long in ancient memory, and Ptolemy Chennus' contemporaries also acknowledged it.[37] Later intellectuals, like Libanius of Antioch, appreciated Cratinus' fondness for drink, noting it next to the proverbial gluttony of Heracles.[38] It is perhaps an appropriate juxtaposition that Alexander's death by drinking ended his famous campaign, whereas Cratinus' death on the eve of Greece's great war was caused by not wanting to see wine wasted.

The works of Cratinus feature many Dionysiac themes. Cratinus also had a close connection to Dionysus in that he presented himself as a dramatic genius inspired by wine.[39] Besides *Wineflask*, he produced plays such as *Satyrs*, *Malthakoi* (soft/unmanly), and *Dionysalexandros*. The latter is a play on the judgement of Paris in which Dionysus takes the place of the shepherd

[35] *Anth.Gr.* 13.29 = Cratinus F 201 *Pytinē*.

[36] Schol. Ar. *Eq.* 400 = Cratinus T 3; Ar. *Pax*. 702–703 = Cratinus T 11e.

[37] See e.g. C. W. Marshall, "Plutarch, Epitomes, and Athenian Comedy," in C. W. Marshall and T. Hawkins (eds.), *Athenian Comedy in the Roman Empire* (London 2016) 131–140, at 133.

[38] Lib. *Ep*. 1477.5 = Cratinus T 22: ἢ οὐχ ἑώρακας αὐτοὺς πίνοντας μὲν ὑπὲρ τὸν Κρατῖνον, ἐσθίοντας δὲ ὑπὲρ τὸν Ἡρακλέα. For the gluttony of Heracles see E. Stafford, *Herakles* (London 2012) 105.

[39] See e.g. Ar. *Eq*. 536 = Cratinus T 11d ("go sit beside Dionysus"), *Ran*. 357 = T11f. See also Cratinus' unassigned fragments 301, 322, 361, and 391.

in choosing the fairest goddess. The god (and his satyrs) proceed to cause all sorts of trouble on Mount Ida.[40]

The *Eunidae* also seems to have a subject linked to Dionysiac activities. Few fragments of the comic play "Descendants of Euneus" survive, and thus much depends on conjecture. Euneus, son of Jason and Hypsipyle, great-grandson of Dionysus himself, played a role in the Trojan war for both sides.[41] In the literary tradition, he was also trained in song by Dionysus' associate Orpheus. It is not clear that Cratinus' play was specifically concerned with him, however. The name also denoted a *genos musikon* in Attica that specialised in supplying festivals with artists and performers, such as dancers and musicians. The connection between the guild and the mythological figure is not explicit until Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, which was produced later than Cratinus' comedy. It is not certain that Cratinus' audience would make the same connection between Euneus and the guild as Euripides did. According to Bakola, "in *Euneidai* Cratinus probably engaged with the production of music,"[42] and a guild of Dionysiac performers seems very appropriate material for comedy. Readers of Ptolemy Chennus may of course not have seen a problem with this and appreciated both the guild name and Jason's son when he mentioned the play in relation to the king's deathbed reading.

Cratinus' heavy drinking, Dionysus, and the Dionysiac performers of the *Eunidae* all fit suspiciously well with the literary tradition surrounding Alexander's death. We have already noted Alexander's drinking, but we may pursue further the two other parallels.

[40] The narrative is set forth in *P.Oxy.* IV 663; discussion in A. Tatti, "Le *Dionysalexandros* de Cratinos," *Metis* 1 (1986) 325–332. Cf. E. Bakola, "Old Comedy Disguised as Satyr Play: A New Reading of Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*," *ZPE* 154 (2005) 46–58.

[41] Hom. *Il* 7.467–469 (sending wine-laden ships to the Greeks); 23.746–747 (ransoming Lycaon, son of Priam).

[42] Bakola, *Cratinus and the Art of Comedy* 179.

4. *Alexandrodionysus*

Alexander's association with the wine god pervades the literary tradition.[43] The main issue is *when* this connection between king and god arose. Some argue that it was not forged until after Alexander's death.[44] Others are, however, inclined to believe that Alexander's Dionysiac association featured in the king's lifetime. For example, in Brian Bosworth's view, Macedonian soldiers and Indian 'informers' created the Dionysiac frame for Alexander to emulate already in 326 B.C., as the army saw signs of the god's manifestation in the landscape.[45] This mythological

[43] See e.g. J. M. O'Brien, *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy* (London 1992), who frames his entire biography around the relationship between Alexander and Dionysus, focusing primarily on incidents of debauchery, such as the killing of Clitus. According to E. Koulakiotis, "Plutarch's *Alexander*, Dionysus and the Metaphysics of Power," in *Ancient Historiography on War and Empire* 226–249, this reading is to follow too closely the grain laid out by Plutarch, whose biography warns of falling into the Dionysiac savagery of the east. For further bibliography see A. I. Molina Marín, *Alejandro Magno (1916–2015): Un siglo de estudios sobre Macedonia Antiqua* (Zaragosa 2018) 190.

[44] Ogden, *Legend of Seleucus* 257.

[45] A. B. Bosworth, *Alexander and the East: The Tragedy of Triumph* (Oxford 1996) 66–132. His argument is augmented in "Alexander, Euripides and Dionysos: The Motivation for Apotheosis,' in R. W. Wallace and E. Harris (eds.), *Transitions to Empire: Essays in Greco-Roman History, 360–146 B.C. in Honor of E. Badian* (Norman 1996) 140–166, esp. 146–148, and "Augustus, the *Res Gestae* and Hellenistic Theories of Apotheosis," *JRS* 89 (1999) 1–18, at 2–3. The main problem with his hypothesis is the absence of firm evidence, see schol. Ap. Rhod. 2.904 citing Clitarchus of Alexandria *BNJ* 137 F 17 (Prandi) with her comment, "The tradition on Dionysos's Indian voyage is not attested before Alexander's Asian expedition, making Kleitarchos an innovator." The argument of *ex eventu* invention of Dionysus in India is laid out in P. Goukowsky, *Essai sur les origins du mythe d'Alexandre* II *Alexandre et Dionysos* (Nancy 1981), esp. 45. There are of course many inconsistencies in the Dionysiac mythologizing while Alexander was in India. To take one of many examples, J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch. Alexander. A Commentary* (Oxford 1969) 174–175 on Plut. *Alex*. 62.8–9, was surely right in noting that the altars set up on the western bank of the Hyphasis did not give prominence to Dionysus over the other Olympians—in fiction, the erection of altars is part of Heracles' tra-

merging of Alexander and Dionysus explains the events after India, such as the plans for an incursion into Arabia,[46] which led up to Alexander's death and gave the king a belief in his own divinity.[47]

In relation to Alexander's last days, the connection between the pair seems firmer, at least evidenced by contemporary writers. Ephippus of Olynthus claims that the reason for Alexander's death by drinking was Dionysus' revenge for the king's destruction of Thebes in 335 B.C.[48] Ephippus connects the death of Alexander with that of Hephaestion, who presumably died of over-drinking, although the most elaborate surviving account indicates that he suffered from a fever as well.[49] Ephippus records that Alexander held a festival of Dionysus in Ecbatana in

dition, not that of Dionysus. See T. Howe and S. Müller, "Mission Accomplished: Alexander at the Hyphasis," *AHB* 26 (2012) 24–42, for a revisionist interpretation of the altars and the return to Babylon.

[46] For the project of an Arabian invasion see Arr. *Anab*. 7.20.1–2 citing Aristobulus F 55 with Strabo 16.1.11 citing Aristobulus F 56. The comparison with Strabo reveals that Arrian has actually extracted the story from his principal source Aristobulus, although he refers to it as an unknown *logos*. A. B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford 1988) 56–57, discusses the differences between Arrian's and Strabo's representation of the source, but not the divine motivation, which is justified by his intent to let the Arabians live by their own rules after the taking (Arr. πολιτεύειν κατὰ τὰ σφῶν νόμιμα, Strab. κρατήσαντα καὶ ἐπιτρέψαντα τὴν πάτριον αὐτονομίαν ἔχειν ἣν εἶχον πρότερον). Arrian repeatedly uses this reasoning for the Indian campaign, and it is also explicit in Strabo, if phrased differently. The conquest of India, another wealthy country like Arabia in Greek thought, is probably what is used as the justification, already in Arrian's and Strabo's source. If so, we may assume that Alexander's desire for deification and the emulation of Dionysus as conqueror of India already appeared in Aristobulus' work. Cf. L. Edmunds, "The Religiosity of Alexander," *GRBS* 12 (1971) 363–391, at 376.

[47] Molina Marín, *Alejandro Magno* 186.

[48] Ath. 434A–B citing Ephippus F 3.

[49] Plut. *Alex*. 72.2 provides the greatest detail of his symptoms. Cf. Diod. 17.110.8, Arr. *Anab*. 7.14.1–4 and 7.18.2–3 citing Aristobulus F 54. Further source collection at Heckel, *Who's Who* 136, s.v. Hephaestion. Polyaenus *Strat.*

324, the place of Hephaestion's death, though the fragment breaks off before Hephaestion's last days are mentioned.[50] This testimony makes the wrath of Dionysus a theme in the earliest historiography on Alexander, and it was developed in later accounts too.[51]

It follows that, by Ptolemy Chennus' time, writers had an extensive catalogue of Alexandrodionysus-connections to chose from, and all the major historiographical accounts contain some, as well as later Greek literature.[52] The obvious connection to Ptolemy's Cratinus reference is Alexander's perceived alcoholism,[53] and drinking is a considerable theme in all the extant

4.3.31 states incorrectly that Hephaestion died at Babylon, but we may see that in the same way as the Babylonian death for Seleucus—the alternative place of death creates an appropriate, thematic link between two subjects, whether Alexander and Seleucus, or Alexander and Hephaestion. Cf. the study of Hephaestion in S. Müller, "In Abhängigkeit von Alexander? Hephaistion bei den Alexander-historiographen," *Gymnasium* 118 (2011) 429–456.

[50] Ath. 537E–358B citing Ephippus F 5. Note that Ephippus does not mention Dionysus when he lists the gods that Alexander dressed up as (Ammon, Artemis, Hermes, Heracles).

[51] Plut. *Alex*. 13.3–5 uses λέγεται, a story from Alexander's tradition, to say that the king often was distressed by the fate of Thebes and thought both that Clitus had died and that the expedition stopped at the Ganges because of Dionysus' revenge for the sack of Thebes. Cf. the close study of this passage by B. L. Cook, "Plutarch's Use of λέγεται: Narrative Design and Source in *Alexander*," *GRBS* 42 (2001) 329–344, at 335–337. Conversely, Arr. *Anab*. 4.8.1–2 and 4.9.4–5 expresses the idea of Dionysus' revenge much more awkwardly in the context of Clitus' death and without reference to Thebes. Cf. Curt. 8.2.6; Plut. *Alex*. 50.2–3 who notes that Clitus and Alexander failed in the sacrifice that they conducted together before the fateful symposium. In the symposium context, the sacrifice to Dionysus may be a ritual from the religious calendar of Macedon, and the festival of Dionysus at the death of Hephaestion also appears to be a typical feature of the religious cycle, see Prandi's comment on Ephippus F 5.

[52] See C. T. Djurslev, "The Figure of Alexander the Great and Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*," in K. Nawotka and A. Wojciechowska (eds.), *Alexander the Great and the East: History, Art, Tradition* (Wiesbaden 2016) 213–222.

[53] The Argeads had always had a special association with Dionysus in their

accounts of his death.[54] The recurring point of contention is whether he drank poison or died of natural causes, but the basic narrative in the primary texts is straightforward. The king attended festivities arranged by the Companion Medius of Larissa, became ill, and died some time later.[55] Ephippus' account of the bout with Proteas does not distort this picture, as the drinking contest could have taken place at Medius' residence in Babylon,[56] and there were other people present to applaud the two

symposium culture, but it became fuel for criticism from southern Greece only during the reigns of Philip and Alexander. For the 'barbarian'-binge stereotype of the Argead royal family see now Müller, *Die Argeaden* 64–68, with a particular discussion of the "new decadence" of Philip and Alexander in S. Müller, "Make it Big: The 'New Decadence' of the Macedonians under Philip II and Alexander III in Greco-Roman Narratives," in T. Howe and S. Müller (eds.), *Folly and Violence in the Court of Alexander the Great and his Successors. Greco-Roman Perspectives* (Bochum/Freiburg 2016) 35–45. Cf. Carney, *King and Court* 247; F. Pownall, "The Symposia of Philip II and Alexander III of Macedon: The View from Greece," in E. Carney and D. Ogden (eds.), *Philip II and Alexander the Great: Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives* (Oxford 2010) 55–65. It is notable that there are no criticisms of Macedonian drinking in Greek comedy until we reach the reign of Philip. In Alexander's tradition, many of the references to his drinking has been collated by O. Amitay, *From Alexander to Jesus* (Berkeley 2010) 163–165, "Alexander Alcoholicus." Early attempts were made to exculpate Alexander's drinking, e.g. Aristobulus FF 30, 59 (on Alexander's death), 62. I agree with Pownall's commentary that Aristobulus may have had special insights into the Macedonian symposium culture and, therefore, his defence of Alexander's heavy drinking does not need to be dismissed as a mere apology.

[54] For an overview of the numerous accounts of Alexander's last days see the basic source collection in W. Heckel and J. Yardley, *Alexander the Great – Historical Sources in Translation* (Malden 2004) 272–293. The principal evidence for the Royal Diaries is available with commentary in Alexander's Ephemerides *BNJ* 117 (Bearzot).

[55] Arr. *Anab*. 7.25.1–7.26.3 citing the Ephemerides *BNJ* 117 F 3a. For further narratives of death, the principal ones surround Medius—see Medius of Larissa *BNJ* 129 T 3a–h (Meeus). There are sources that do not follow the Royal Diaries, such as the *Liber de Morte* (87–113), Diod. 17.117–118, Curt. 10.5, Just. *Epit.* 12.13.7–9, but Medius remains the main culprit.

[56] Also the opinion of Prandi in her commentary on Ephippus F 3.

contestants. The attendees of Macedonian banquets represent another clue to Ptolemy Chennus' literary maneuvering.

5. *Alexandrokolakes and Technitai*

The most relevant point of reference for Ptolemy's purposes is the *Dionysokolakes*-turned-*Alexandrokolakes*, "flatterers of Alexander,"[57] known from Chares of Mytilene, who held the obscure office of *eisangeleus* or royal usher. This passage once again suggests that Dionysus was used by contemporaries in portraying Alexander. Chares mentions these artists in relation to the mass-marriages at Susa, at which they received extravagant gifts from the king. They must have taken part in the great number of dramatic and musical competitions towards the end of Alexander's life.[58] We also know that performers were generally present at banquets in Babylon from the testimony of Nicoboule, who may have attended various festivities in the inner circles of the Macedonian court.[59]

The presence of performers is also awkwardly acknowledged in the popular Greek *Alexander Romance* (hereafter *AR*), in its 'alpha'-recension.[60] This biography is a three-book fictional extravaganza that was probably formed in the third century A.D., but many features in it hail from much earlier periods. In

[57] Ath. 538B–539A citing Chares of Mytilene *BNJ* 125 F 4 (Müller). Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1405a23–25: καὶ ὁ μὲν διονυσοκόλακας, αὐτοὶ δ' αὐτοὺς τεχνίτας καλοῦσιν (ταῦτα δ' ἄμφω μεταφορά, ἡ μὲν ῥυπαινόντων ἡ δὲ τοὐναντίον). For flattery in the context of the Second Sophistic see S. Asirvatham, "Flattery, History, and the *Pepaideumenos*," in *Ancient Historiography on War and Empire* 262–274.

[58] For more than twenty tabulated examples see B. Le Guen, "Theatre, Religion, and Politics at Alexander's Travelling Court," in F. Csapo et al. (eds.), *Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century BC* (Berlin/Boston 2014) 249–274.

[59] Ath. 537D citing Nicoboule *BNJ* 127 F 2 (Sheridan): Νικοβούλη δέ φησιν ὅτι παρὰ τὸ δεῖπνον πάντες οἱ ἀγωνισταὶ ἐσπούδαζον τέρπειν τὸν βασιλέα. I follow Sheridan's sober assessment of the primary evidence.

[60] See C. T. Djurslev, "Alexander Romance," *Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (Hoboken 2017) https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah30507.

Haight's translation of the lacunose Greek, Cassander arrived with poison to kill the king, while Alexander "was enjoying himself with his friends and his staff about him at the festival of Dionysus."[61] Wilhelm Kroll's restoration of the Greek does not support this reading: his edition rather suggests that the staff mentioned were Dionysiac *technitai*. The reliable Armenian rendition of the *AR* from the fifth century corroborates this meaning when it speaks of "Dionysian artists."[62] According to Krzysztof Nawotka's commentary on this passage, the name reflects a Hellenistic tradition developed very close to the historical Alexander's death. The author of the *AR* has phrased it in language fitting for the reputation that the Dionysiac *technitai* acquired in the early Hellenistic period.[63]

Contemporary and later authors' awareness of artists during Alexander's carousing last days thus resonate well with Ptolemy's reference to Cratinus' *Eunidae*, which concerned a guild of performers. These performers had a relation to Dionysus in the same way that Alexander's artists held a relation to the king. In mentioning them, Ptolemy replayed several tropes latent in the Greek representation of the Macedonian court, such as methomania, pomposity, and sycophancy. In all the other ancient histories of Alexander, there is also a focus on the king's growing

[61] E. H. Haight, *The Life of Alexander of Macedon by Ps.-Callisthenes* (New York 1955) 126, translating *AR* 3.31.6 τοῦ δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἡδέως γενομένου μετὰ τῶν παρόντων φίλων καὶ τεχνιτῶν [καὶ] <τῶν> περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον (πολλοὶ γὰρ ἀπήντων εἰς ἄνεσιν ἐν Βαβυλῶνι…; text W. Kroll, *Historia Alexandri Magni. Recensio Vetusta* (Berlin 1926). R. Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (Harmondsworth 1991), does not translate this passage, nor has the publisher released the third and final volume of Stoneman's Mondadori edition of the *AR*.

[62] A. M. Wolohojian, *The Romance of Alexander by Ps.-Callisthenes* (New York/London 1969) §263. Cf. Julius Valerius *History of Alexander* 3.31, ed. J-.P. Callu, *Julius Valère. Roman d' Alexandre* (Turnhout 2010) 209–210 (no mention of Dionysus); *De Morte Testamentoque Alexandri Magni Liber* §§96–97 (Callu 348–349: lacunose text, no mention of Dionysus).

[63] K. Nawotka, *The Alexander Romance by Ps.-Callisthenes. A Historical Commentary* (Leiden 2017) 234.

immoderation as the army advances into the East,[64] and so Ptolemy's placement of Cratinus' comedy on Alexander's deathbed may have had the subtle ironic hint that the king died not only at the peak of power, but also at the very height of his intemperance.

6. *Conclusions*

From this analysis of Alexander's and Cratinus' traditions, I contend that Ptolemy Chennus invented a story in which the king was supplied with a highly symbolic and suitable piece of deathbed reading. In doing so, Ptolemy played on several themes inherent in the literary traditions of both the king and his book. Whatever the wider resonances for Ptolemy's readers, it is clear that the author targeted the Dionysiac frame so strongly associated with two of antiquity's greatest drinkers, Alexander and Cratinus, ostensible devotees of Dionysus, and lovers of music and the poetic craft. The historical Alexander may not have read Cratinus' *Eunidae*, but the Alexander of the literary tradition certainly could.

Ancient readers may not have welcomed a longwinded exegesis of Ptolemy's quip, but it is an important exercise for anyone interested in Alexandrology in antiquity. Ptolemy Chennus is but one of many under-utilized writers from the first centuries A.D., and we need to know more about his and others' literary games because they complement our interpretations of the more familiar works, such as Plutarch and Arrian. For example, Ptolemy's representation ties into the *topos* of Alexander's bibliophily, announced at the beginning, and so supports the argument for including it in the wider canon of topics available to intellectuals in the Second Sophistic.[65] Surely playing with this curriculum, inventing new or rearranging old stories on the basis of it, shows how effortlessly familiar it was to Ptolemy Chennus and his

[64] D. Ogden, *Alexander the Great: Myth, Genesis, and Sexuality* (Exeter 2011) 182–185.

[65] An attempt to tabulate the canonical topics is made by Wirth, *Der Weg in die Vergessenheit* 15–19.

contemporaries. Determining what the canons contained in different cultures and at different times may ultimately cast the entire tradition of Alexander in a new light.[66]

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[66] This revision has been done well for the *AR* tradition in C. Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses du Roman d'Alexandre. Domaine grec* (Paris 2002), and R. Stoneman, *Alexander the Great, A Life in Legend* (New Haven 2008). For the Middle Ages and later periods see the rich *Alexander Redivivus* series published by Brepols; for the Enlightenment see P. Briant, *The First European: A History of Alexander in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2017). There is no reason why we should not explore more fully the influential receptions of antiquity too, as in the first part of *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Alexander*.

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