

# NEITHER AGAMEMNON NOR THERSITES, ACHILLES NOR MARGITES. THE HERACLID KINGS OF ANCIENT MACEDON.\*

## ABSTRACT:

*In modern scholarship a distinctly 'Homeric' presentation of the ancient Macedonian kings and their court still endures, in spite of recent notes on the use of 'artifice' in key ancient accounts. Although the adventures and achievements of Alexander the Great are certainly imbued with epic colour, to extend those literary tropes and topoi to the rule of earlier kings (and to wider Macedonian society) is often to misunderstand and misrepresent the ancient evidence.*

*This paper offers a fresh review of the presentation of the early-Macedonian monarchy in the ancient sources, and considers the depiction of the Argead dynasty in both hostile and more-sympathetic accounts. It highlights the importance of another mythological model for these ancient kings: one that was supremely heroic, but not Homeric. The Argead appropriation of Heracles, Pindar's 'hero god' (ἥρωος θεός Neemean 3.22), was a key part of the self-representation of successive kings. Undoubtedly the crucial paradigm for Macedonian rulers, Heracles provided them with an identity and authority that appealed to diverse audiences, and it is time to consider the subtlety of the Argead presentation of their dynasty as Heraclid.*

---

\* This piece is dedicated to former colleagues and students in the Department of Classics at the University of Adelaide. I would like to thank, first, Han and Angelique Baltussen, Jacqueline Clarke, Ron Newbold, and Margaret O'Hea – as well as Peter Davis, Stephanie Hester, Vicki Jennings, and Silke Sitzler – for their friendship and support. Two people, though, deserve special mention for their many kindnesses: the wonderful and indomitable Andrea Katsaros, and the much-missed David Hester. For convenience, Greek text and translations (adapted) from the following editions: J.W. Cohoon, *Dio Chrysostom: Discourses 1-11* (Cambridge MA 1932); C. Bradford Welles, *Diodorus: Library of History. Volume VIII Books 16.66-17* (Cambridge MA 1963); P.A. Brunt, *Arrian: Anabasis of Alexander. Volume I Books 1-4* (Cambridge MA 1976); A.D. Godley, *Herodotus: The Persian Wars. Volume IV Books 8-9* (Cambridge MA 1925); M.B. Trapp, *Maximus of Tyre: The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford 1997); Christopher Collard, Martin Cropp, & John Gibert, *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays. Volume II* (Oxford 2004); A.F. Natoli, *The Letter of Speusippus to Philip II* (Stuttgart 2004); G.S. Shrimpton, *Theopompus the Historian* (Montreal 1991); G. Norlin, *Isocrates. Volume I* (Cambridge MA 1928), T.L. Papillon, *Isocrates II* (Austin 2004).

The presentation of the ancient Macedonians as ‘Homeric’ in nature is a trope that endures across modern scholarship, an inevitable consequence, perhaps, of our continued fascination with the life and achievements of the ‘notoriously philhomerical’ Alexander the Great.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, summary reviews of the Macedonian context – replete with broad analogies to the Homeric world – are a common feature of many influential works on the great Argead kings,<sup>2</sup> reflecting an ancient source tradition itself

---

<sup>1</sup> Froma I. Zeitlin, ‘Visions and revisions of Homer’, in S. Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek Under Rome. Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge 2001) 195-266 (195). On Alexander and Achilles see Walter Ameling, ‘Alexander und Achilleus. Eine Bestandsaufnahme’, in W. Will & J. Heinrichs (eds.), *Zu Alexander dem Großen. Festschrift Gerhard Wirth zum 60. Geburtstag am 9-12-1986*. 2 Vols. (Amsterdam 1988) II.657–692; Ada Cohen, ‘Alexander and Achilles – Macedonians and ‘Mycenaeans’’, in J.B. Carter & S.P. Morris (eds.), *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule* (Austin 1995) 483-505.

<sup>2</sup> Robin J. Lane Fox’s epic, *Alexander the Great* (London 1986 [1973]), springs to mind, and his vivid presentation of a kingdom where the descendants of Homer’s heroic age lived on, a people who ‘at the call of a new Achilles... would prepare for Greece’s last Homeric emulation’ (67). Similar notes can be found across other key texts: P.A. Brunt, *Arrian: Anabasis of Alexander. Volume I Books 1-4* (Cambridge MA 1976) xxxv (‘Macedonian institutions too, though they resemble those we find in the Homeric poems, were alien to the Greeks of Alexander’s time ...’); J.R. Ellis, ‘Macedonia under Philip’, in M.B. Hatzopoulos & L.D. Loukopoulos (eds.), *Philip of Macedon* (London 1981) 146 (‘... this distinctive society retained some features that seem unusual, often anachronistic, in the fourth-century context – although perhaps not so out-of-place in Homer’s heroic world’). More recently: Frank L. Holt, *Alexander the Great and the Mystery of the Elephant Medallions* (Berkeley 2003) 7-8 (‘... In battles, brawls, and drinking bouts, the Macedonians measured a man from king to commoner by the implacable standards of Achilles and Agamemnon ...’); R.A. Gabriel, *Philip II of Macedonia: Greater than Alexander* (Washington DC 2010) 6 (‘... In many ways the Macedonia of Philip’s day was very much the society of the Mycenaean age ... where the *Iliad* was not only an ancient heroic tale but also a reflection of how men still lived ...’); and also the excellent collection by Elizabeth Carney & Daniel Ogden (eds.), *Philip II and Alexander the Great. Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives* (Oxford 2010), where different contributors suggest that, even into the fourth century BC, Macedonian culture remained ‘naïve in a Homeric sense’ (17), that Macedonian society was ‘archaic and semi-heroic in nature’ (63), and that the Macedonian ethos was fundamentally ‘Homeric in nature’ (120). Finally, one should mention the influence of Friedrich Granier’s, *Die makedonische Heeresversammlung: Ein Bei-*

infused with epic colour.<sup>3</sup> The extended set of analogies Dio Chrysostom develops in the *Second Kingship Oration* provide a particularly striking example. In this imagined dialogue, Philip II asks his son:

Ἀλλὰ σύ, ὦ Ἀλέξανδρε, πότερον ἔλοιο ἂν Ἀγαμέμνων ἢ Ἀχιλλεὺς ἢ ἐκείνων τις  
γεγονέναι τῶν ἡρώων ἢ Ὅμηρος;

οὐ μέντοι, ἦ δ' ὅς ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, ἀλλὰ ὑπερβάλλειν πολὺ τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα καὶ τοὺς  
ἄλλους. οὔτε γὰρ σὲ χεῖρονα νομίζω τοῦ Πηλέως οὔτε τῆς Φθίας ἀσθενεστέραν τὴν  
Μακεδονίαν οὔτε τὸν Ὀλυμπον ἀδοξότερον ὄρους τοῦ Πηλίου φαίην ἂν· ἀλλὰ μὴν  
οὐδὲ παιδείας φαυλοτέρας ἐπιτετύχηκα ὑπ' Ἀριστοτέλους ἢ ἐκεῖνος ὑπὸ Φοῖνικος τοῦ  
Ἀμύντορος, φυγάδος ἀνδρὸς καὶ διαφόρου τῷ πατρί.

‘But you, Alexander, would you like to have been Agamemnon or Achilles or any one  
of the heroes of those days, or Homer?’

‘Not at all’, Alexander said, ‘but I should like to go far beyond Achilles and the  
others. For you are not inferior to Peleus, in my opinion; nor is Macedonia less powerful  
than Phthia; nor would I admit Olympus is a less famous mountain than Pelion; and, be-  
sides, the education I have gained under Aristotle is not inferior to that which Achilles  
derived from Amyntor’s son, Phoenix, an exiled man and estranged from his father.’

(*Or.* 2.14-15)

In addition to the common pairing of Alexander and Achilles, the wider Macedonian court is also  
made subject to a strong *Iliadic* contrast in this royal ‘exchange’, with a detailed comparison devel-  
oped as part of a Second Sophistic discussion of leadership that draws key ideals from Homer.<sup>4</sup>

---

*trag zum antiken Staatsrecht* (Munich 1931), and claims made there for the Homeric origins of the  
Macedonian monarchy (see 4-28 and 48-57).

<sup>3</sup> See Judith Mossman’s ‘Tragedy and epic in Plutarch’s *Alexander*’, *JHS* 108 (1988) 83-93. For  
Homer’s influence on ancient historiography, see Hermann Strasburger, ‘Homer und die Ges-  
chichtsschreibung’, in W. Schmitthenner & R. Zoepffel (eds.), *Hermann Strasburger. Studien zur Al-  
ten Geschichte*. Vol. 2 (Hildesheim & New York 1982) 1057–1097.

<sup>4</sup> On Dio’s presentation of Alexander, and the central place of Homer in this dialogue, see Tim  
Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire* (Oxford 2004) 200-206. John Moles offers the

But to extend beyond Alexander literary themes and *topoi* so prevalent in the later presentation of ‘the Great one’ is to misconstrue the ancient evidence, and the representation of Macedonian society, as a whole, in such terms has long been questioned.<sup>5</sup> When we review the evidence we find that *both* points of this comparison tend to be inchoate: at one end, any picture presented of early-Macedonian society must always be provisional, given the mean and meagre nature of the ancient source material; while at the other end, problems in establishing the ‘historical’ in Homeric society are notorious.<sup>6</sup> The problem for any seeking to draw such analogies with the epic world, is that while Homer’s works may be highly political in a broad sense, ‘the formal structures and institutions of the communities involved are never more than lightly sketched’.<sup>7</sup> Even those who maintain that the Homeric epics do reflect something of the social and cultural history of early Archaic Greece (used as an *Überrest*) would still accept that the use of these texts as a *Quelle* is extremely problematic.<sup>8</sup>

---

best introduction to these speeches, in ‘The Kingship Orations of Dio Chrysostom’, *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 6 (1990) 297–375 (337-347 on the Second Oration).

<sup>5</sup> Eugene N. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus. The Emergence of Macedon* (Princeton 1990) 236. In his consideration of Macedonian political institutions, Borza points to the limitations of epic analogies, noting that efforts to make such comparisons are ‘... fraught with problems of evidence and method’. More recently, see Pierre Carlier’s excellent, ‘Homeric and Macedonian kingship’, in Roger Brock & Stephen Hodkinson (eds.), *Alternatives to Athens. Varieties of Political Organization and Community in Ancient Greece* (Oxford 2002) 259-268. Carlier also highlights the ‘flimsy’ nature of epic assimilations, claims that ‘most historians assert ... in a few sentences, as if they were obvious’ (259).

<sup>6</sup> For a fine summary of key points, see Kurt A. Raaflaub, ‘Riding on Homer’s chariot: the search for a historical ‘epic society’, in *Antichthon* 45 (2011) 1-34 (1-13). On the *polis* and the political in Homer, see Raaflaub’s, ‘Homer to Solon: the rise of the *polis* (the written sources)’, in M.H. Hansen (ed.), *The Ancient Greek City-State* (Copenhagen 1993) 41-105 (46-64).

<sup>7</sup> Robin Osborne, ‘Homer’s society’, in R. Fowler (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge 2004) 211. Also Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual. Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford 1994) 22: ‘leadership in Homer tends to remain largely personal rather than institutional. There is no royal officialdom, taxation, judicial function, or legitimate monopoly of coercion of power’.

<sup>8</sup> To paraphrase Jonas Grethlein, ‘“Imperishable Glory” to History: the *Iliad* and the Trojan War’, in David Konstan & K.A. Raaflaub (eds.) *Epic and History* (Oxford 2010) 122-144 (129).

Of course, to question the presentation of a ‘Homeric’ Macedonia is not to deny the enduring importance of those epics as central cultural icons in the ancient world.<sup>9</sup> Nor is it to deny the particular importance of Alexander the Great’s strong passion for the works of Homer, nor even the ‘cultivated closeness’ of later Macedonian elites to the epic world.<sup>10</sup> And while it may be seductive to echo Alexander’s famous tirade at Opis (Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.9.2-3) and present the early Macedonia as a ‘sub-Homeric enclave’,<sup>11</sup> the evidence from the kingdom itself does not fully support such comparisons. Indeed, prior to the reign of Alexander III, it does seem as though the Macedonian kings were not usually, they were not especially, ‘Homeric’.<sup>12</sup> For example, although some would cast Philip II as a latter-day Agamemnon, or present him as ‘akin to Achilles’, such depictions are not quite in keeping with

---

<sup>9</sup> Homer remained, as Plato notes, ‘the poet who has educated Greece’ (τὴν Ἑλλάδα πεπαίδευκεν οὗτος ὁ ποιητής *Resp.* 10.606e). See Robert Lamberton, ‘Homer in antiquity’, in Ian Morris & B.B. Powell (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden 1997) 33-54, and Casey Dué, ‘Homer’s post-classical legacy’, in J.M. Foley (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (Oxford 2005) 397-414.

<sup>10</sup> Quotation here from Richard Hunter, ‘Homer and Greek literature’, in Robert Fowler (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge 2004) 235-253. Commenting on the importance of Homer for the Ptolemaic dynasty, Hunter observes: ‘At the political level, Homer carried a powerful charge through the traditionally cultivated closeness of the Macedonian elite to the epic world ... and it is in Homeric terms that poets regularly depicted their royal patrons’ (249).

<sup>11</sup> Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedonia, 356-323 B.C. A Historical Biography* (Berkeley, 1991 [1974]) 6. Green highlights the fourth-century BC presentation of the kingdom as ‘frankly primitive, preserving customs and institutions which might have made even a Spartan raise his eyebrows’.

<sup>12</sup> I thank my anonymous readers for the observation that the arrival of Olympias into the Argead royal house marked a key point in the changing presentation of the Macedonian kings. Certainly the heroic pedigree of the Epirote dynasty, and specifically their descent from Achilles, was well established by the fifth century BC (see Thetis’ prophecy in Euripides’ *Andromache*, 1238-1252). For a discussion of those ties see William Allan, *The Andromache and Euripidean Tragedy* (Oxford 2000), 152-160 and Andrew Erskine, *Troy Between Greece and Rome. Local Tradition and Imperial Power* (Oxford 2001) 122-124.

ancient presentations of the king.<sup>13</sup> We should give/note one example, an anecdote from Book 16 of Diodorus' *Bibliotheca*, which tells of this Argead celebrating his victory at Chaeronea in 338 BC:

Λέγουσι δέ τινες ὅτι καὶ παρὰ τὸν πότον πολὺν ἐμφορησάμενος ἄκρατον καὶ μετὰ τῶν φίλων τὸν ἐπινίκιον ἄγων κῶμον διὰ μέσων τῶν αἰχμαλώτων ἐβάδιζεν ὑβρίζων διὰ λόγων τὰς τῶν ἀκληρούντων δυστυχίας. Δημάδην δὲ τὸν ῥήτορα κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν καιρὸν ἐν τοῖς αἰχμαλώτοις ὄντα χρήσασθαι παρρησία καὶ λόγον ἀποφθέγγασθαι δυνάμενον ἀναστεῖλαι τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ἀσέλγειαν. φασὶ γὰρ εἰπεῖν αὐτόν, 'βασιλεῦ, τῆς τύχης σοι περιθείσης πρόσωπον Ἀγαμέμνονος αὐτὸς οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ πράττων ἔργα Θερσίτου;' τὸν δὲ Φίλιππον τῆ τῆς ἐπιπλήξεως εὐστοχίᾳ κινηθέντα τοσοῦτο μεταβαλεῖν τὴν ὅλην διάθεσιν...

'The story is told that in the drinking after dinner Philip downed a large amount of un-mixed wine and forming with his friends a *comus* in celebration of the victory, paraded through the midst of his captives, jeering all the time at the misfortunes of the luckless men. Now Demades, the orator, who was then one of the captives, spoke out boldly and made a remark able to curb the king's disgusting exhibition. He is said to have remarked: 'O King, when Fortune has cast you in the role of Agamemnon, are you not ashamed to act the part of Thersites?' Philip altered his whole demeanour completely.'

(*Bibliotheca* 16.87.1-2)

Diodorus cannot make the alternatives here any more apparent; the Macedonian king can either follow the heroic example set by Agamemnon – the great commander-in-chief of the Greeks – or he can continue to humiliate himself by imitating the impudent Thersites, 'the absolute antithesis of the 'Homeric hero''.<sup>14</sup> But while Demades' reference to these contrasting characters is made to emphasise the inappropriateness of the Macedonian king's actions, the particular association of Philip and Agamemnon

---

<sup>13</sup> Philip as Agamemnon in Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* (n.2) 65, Philip as Achilles in Gabriel, *Philip II of Macedonia* (n.2) 6.

<sup>14</sup> W.G. Thalmann, 'Thersites: comedy, scapegoats, and heroic ideology in the *Iliad*', *TAPA* 118 (1988) 1-28 (1).

here is neither crucial nor common.<sup>15</sup> And as Philip planned his own Asian campaign soon after this success at Chaeronea, even still the example of the great Agamemnon was not evoked by the Macedonian. Unlike with King Agesilaus of Sparta, who, before setting off for Asia, attempted to re-stage the ceremonies at Aulis as he launched his own ‘Homeric’ expedition in 396 BC.<sup>16</sup> Philip attempts no explicit appeal to epic archetypes as he prepares the Macedonian campaign against Persia some sixty years later. In fact, when and where we do see the early Argeads make use of Homeric *topoi*, it can be to exploit a very different set of associations than those that we might expect.

Consider the occasional pieces written by Pindar and Bacchylides, in the first half of the fifth century BC, in honour of Alexander I.<sup>17</sup> Fragments of two poems commissioned by the Macedonian king survive (Pindar fr. 120-121 and Bacchylides fr. 20B), which reuse and refashion Homeric material to celebrate the rule of their Argead patron. David Fearn has highlighted the importance of these fragments recently, reviewing them at length and offering a timely assessment of Alexander’s use of ‘rhetorical manipulation to be all things to all people’ in an uncertain period for the kingdom after the

---

<sup>15</sup> Again I owe thanks to my readers for this observation. On the stock figure of Thersites in later literature – a ‘perfect allegory of an insubordinate citizenry’ for Maximus of Tyre (*Or.* 26.5) – see *RE* 5A.2463-2468. On Philip’s post-Chaeronea revelling as a *topos* in the sources, see Francis Pownall, ‘The *symposia* of Philip II and Alexander III of Macedon. The view from Greece’, in Carney & Ogden (eds.), *Philip II and Alexander the Great* (n.2) 55-65 (57-58).

<sup>16</sup> See, first, Xenophon *Hellenica* 3.4.3. There is a more elaborate account in Plutarch, where a voice in a dream reminds the Spartan: ‘that no one has ever been appointed general of all Hellas together except Agamemnon, in former times, and now yourself’ (ὅτι μὲν οὐδεὶς τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὁμοῦ συμπάσης ἀπεδείχθη στρατηγὸς ἢ πρότερον Ἀγαμέμνων καὶ σὺ νῦν μετ’ ἐκεῖνον *Agesilaus* 6.4-6). For a discussion of Agesilaus and Agamemnon (and Alexander), see now Sonya Nevin, ‘Negative comparison: Agamemnon and Alexander in Plutarch’s *Agesilaus-Pompey*’, *GRBS* 54 (2014) 45-68 (50-59).

<sup>17</sup> For Alexander I’s patronage of Pindar, see Dio Chrysostomus, *Or.* 2.33. N.G.L. Hammond, *The Macedonian State. The Origins, Institutions, and History* (Oxford 1989) 209-210 suggests that Hellanicus, Herodotus, and Bacchylides too were welcomed to the royal court at Aegae in this period.

Persian War.<sup>18</sup> The fragment of Bacchylides' poem, first, presents an intricate sympotic fantasy, during which 'the gifts of Dionysus' are imagined to:

ἀνδράσι δ' ὑψοτάτω πέμπει, μερίμνας·  
αὐτίκα μὲν πολίων κράδεμνα λύει,  
παῖσι δ' ἀνθρώποις μοναρχήσειν δοκεῖ·  
...send men's thoughts to soar sky-high:

For instance, a man is undoing the veils of cities,  
and fancies he will be monarch over all men

The image and idea of 'undoing the veils of cities' is Homeric, but of particular note here is the 'essential Trojanness' of this metaphor which is evocative of the final fall of the great city (see both *Iliad* 16.100 and *Odyssey* 13.388). For Fearn, the use of such a striking *topos* is intriguing given that 'Macedonian elite receptions of the association between Troy, Paris, and our own Alexander can be established'.<sup>19</sup> Established with reference to Pindar fr. 120:

Ὀλβίων ὁμόνυμε Δαρδανιδᾶν  
παῖ θρασύμηδες Ἀμύντα  
Namesake of the blessed son of Dardanus,  
Bold-counselling son of Amyntas...

These are the opening lines of another encomium to Alexander I, one that plays on the name Alexander, king of Macedon, and also the Trojan prince Paris Alexander. Here Pindar associates his patron with a famous figure from Homeric myth, and, like Bacchylides, he uses a specific *Iliadic* paradigm. But, again, the parallel is not quite what we might expect, presenting neither wide-ruling Agamemnon nor even godlike Achilles. Instead, a connection between the Macedonian king and a Trojan hero is

---

<sup>18</sup> David Fearn, 'Narrating ambiguity: murder and Macedonian allegiance (Hdt. 5.17-22)', in E. Irwin & E. Greenwood (eds.), *Reading Herodotus. A Study of the logoi in Book 5 of Herodotus' Histories* (Cambridge 2007) 98-127 (106-110). See also David Fearn, *Bacchylides. Politics, Performance, Poetic Tradition* (Oxford 2007) 27-86; the quote here is taken from this latter work (51), as are the text, translations, and general discussion of the encomia that follows.

<sup>19</sup> Fearn, *Bacchylides* (n.18) 48.

made explicit. Furthermore, this is a hero so ambiguous that Fearn wonders whether Pindar or Alexander I were ‘particularly concerned about Greek receptions of this association, which have the potential to make a radically different appraisal of the connection.’<sup>20</sup> But Alexander perhaps sought to exploit an association with Troy in order to draw a favourable response from more-regional communities? We glimpse in these small pieces the careful and balanced presentation of a Macedonian king, in terms agreeable to diverse communities, seeking to garner support from bordering territories in the wake of the Persian Wars.<sup>21</sup> One wonders, then, whether the link to a ‘blessed son of Dardanus’ was quite particular to Alexander I, perhaps similar to the personal connection to Achilles that Alexander III cultivated during his lifetime.

Although the select use of Homeric models by these poets seems *recherché*, unfortunately, these fascinating fragments perhaps only hint at early courtly concerns, and there is little more that can be said for sure about this particular presentation of the ‘Philhellene’. But the unusual epic archetypes employed by (or for) this Argead king should make us more circumspect about reading Homeric plots into early Macedonian history.<sup>22</sup> As we have suggested already, the indiscriminate use of such models is inappropriate: what is more, it is often unnecessary, given that there is a rich body of evidence that highlights the importance of an alternate mythic identity and set of associations for the ancient Argeads. A mythological model that was supremely heroic, but not Homeric. There is much more to be gained from a proper consideration of the Argead appropriation of Heracles, Pindar’s ἦρωος θεός (*Nemean* 3.22), as a key part of the self-representation of successive Macedonian kings. This is not just to

---

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 51. The Argeads and Troy are also linked, briefly, in Arrian, who tells us Alexander III sacrificing to the Trojan Athena and to Priam on the altar of Zeus Herkeios (*Anabasis* 1.11.8).

<sup>21</sup> On Alexander’s careful use of Greek, non-Greek, and Persian connections to extend his kingdom’s power after the Greek defeat of Xerxes’ campaign, see Sławomir Sprawski, ‘The early Temenid kings to Alexander I’, in J. Roisman & I. Worthington (eds.), *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (Malden MA & Oxford 2010) 127-144 (139-141). On a comparable presentation of a shared Greek and Trojan past in later Epirote traditions, see Erskine, *Troy Between Greece and Rome* (n.12) 122-123 and 160-161.

<sup>22</sup> To restate a point made by Elizabeth Carney, ‘Artifice and Alexander history’, in A.B. Bosworth & E.J. Baynham (eds.), *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford 2000) 263-285 (285).

substitute one set of vague, heroic *topoi* for another; but even if it is, at least successive Argead kings actively and consistently used these *topoi*, and, consequently, we should review why and how they did so.<sup>23</sup>

#### EARLY MACEDONIAN HERACLIDS

As far as we can tell, the Macedonian requisition of Heracles dates to the early decades of the fifth century BC, and the reign of Alexander I.<sup>24</sup> In Book 5 of Herodotus' *Histories* we meet King Alexander again, this time exploiting a contentious family association with Argos in order to 'prove himself an Argive' and even claim a place in, and victory at, the Olympic games (5.22.2).<sup>25</sup> Later, in Book 8, Herodotus again returns to the topic of the origins of the Macedonian royal family, and establishes a most distinguished pedigree for Alexander by embellishing the link with Argos and detailing the descent of the Argeads from Temenus (the grandson of Heracles), down to Perdiccas the founder of the Macedonian royal house:<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> On the considerable influence of Heracles on ancient Greek 'rulership', see Ulrich Huttner, *Die politische Rolle der Heraklesgestalt im griechischen Herrschertum* (Stuttgart 1997). Also Irad Malkin, *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean. Greeks Overseas* (Oxford 2011) 119-40 on Heracles/Melqart as mediating figures that provide 'frameworks of identity' for Greeks and non-Greeks alike.

<sup>24</sup> The Argead dynasty first articulate a very specific claim to Heracles, promoting in Herodotus their own family legend (αὐτοὶ λέγουσι Hdt. 5.22.1). On the political use of such myths, see the introduction offered by Naoise MacSweeney, *Foundation Myths and Politics in Ancient Ionia* (Cambridge 2013) 7-12, who notes: 'It has long been established in literary and archaeological theory that texts, ideas, and objects have agency. This agency means that foundation myths are not passive objects reflecting social realities, but active subjects that influence and create social realities' (10).

<sup>25</sup> Alexander I's determination to have his Greek origins recognised has been much discussed. See N.G.L. Hammond & G.T. Griffith, *A History of Macedonia. Volume II 550-336 BC* (Oxford 1979) 98-103, and Ernst Badian, 'Herodotus on Alexander I of Macedon: a study in some subtle silences', in S. Hornblower (ed.), *Greek Historiography* (Oxford 1994) 107-130.

<sup>26</sup> The mythological Temenus son of Hyllus, who, with Aristodemus and Cresphontes, restored the Heraclidae to the Argolid and then ruled over Argos. Thucydides also agrees as to the number of Mac-

τοῦ δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου τούτου ἑβδομος γενέτωρ Περδίκκης ἐστὶ ὁ κτησάμενος τῶν Μακεδόνων τὴν τυραννίδα τρώψω τοιῶδε. ἐξ Ἄργεος ἔφυγον ἐς Ἴλλυριοὺς τῶν Τημένου ἀπογόνων τρεῖς ἀδελφοί, Γαυάνης τε καὶ Ἀέροπος καὶ Περδίκκης, ἐκ δὲ Ἴλλυριῶν ὑπερβαλόντες ἐς τὴν ἄνω Μακεδονίην ἀπίκοντο ἐς Λεβαίην πόλιν...

[139] ἀπὸ τούτου δὴ τοῦ Περδίκκεω Ἀλέξανδρος ὧδε ἐγένετο· Ἀμύντεω παῖς ἦν Ἀλέξανδρος, Ἀμύντης δὲ Ἀλκέτεω, Ἀλκέτεω δὲ πατὴρ ἦν Ἀέροπος, τοῦ δὲ Φίλιππος, Φιλίππου δὲ Ἀργαῖος, τοῦ δὲ Περδίκκης ὁ κτησάμενος τὴν ἀρχήν.

‘This Alexander was seventh in descent from Perdiccas, who got for himself the tyranny of Macedonia in the way that I will show. Three brothers of the lineage of Temenus came as banished men from Argos to Illyria, Gauanes and Aeropus and Perdiccas; and from Illyria they crossed over into the highlands of Macedonia till they came to the town Lebaea...

...From that Perdiccas Alexander was descended, being the son of Amyntas, who was the son of Alcetes; Alcetes’ father was Aeropus, and this was Philip; Philip’s father was Argaeus, and his again was Perdiccas, who won that lordship.’ (Herodotus, *Histories* 8.137-9)

Following the Persian defeat in Greece in 479 BC, and subsequent withdrawal from Europe, Alexander I seems determined to articulate this ‘ancient’ connection to Argos, and versions of the myth of the Heraclidae, in order to legitimize the Argead position both domestically and also in the wider Greek world.<sup>27</sup> Eugene Borza notes that, from the early-fifth century BC, it was ‘fashionable to lay all man-

---

edonian kings and this line of descent from Temenus (2.99.3-6, see also 5.80.2). For a convenient review of the myths Alexander exploited, see Jonathan M. Hall, ‘Contested ethnicities: perceptions of Macedonia within evolving definitions of Greek ethnicity’, in Irad Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity. Center for Hellenic Studies Colloquia*, 5 (Cambridge, MA 2001) 159-186.

<sup>27</sup> On Alexander’s ‘revived’ contact with the Greek world, see Sprawski, ‘The early Temenid kings to Alexander I’ (n.21) 141-143. Considering that Macedonia had previously been subordinate to Persia, this was now a time when political circumstances pressed Alexander to play the ‘genealogical game à

ner of heroic and mythical deeds at the door of the famous and ancient Argive state’, and Heracles was certainly the ideal first-ancestor for a remote dynasty at the edge of the Hellenic world, given his fame, his far-ranging adventures, and flexibility of character.<sup>28</sup>

Moving down through the dynastic line, the Argead association with Heracles – again emphasising both the heroic and Hellenic origins of the king, specifically – was also encouraged by Perdiccas II. The reign of this son of Alexander I was a long but compromised one, a period of decline during which the expansion of the kingdom was checked by internal division and the challenge of external powers.<sup>29</sup> But, nonetheless, the embattled Perdiccas is worthy of note as the first Argead monarch to include the head of Heracles on his coinage, making explicit the royal link with the hero.<sup>30</sup> This issue of small denominations with a new type seems to have been introduced during the Peace of Nicias (c.417-416 BC), around the time when the Macedonian was induced to join the Argive-Spartan alliance and it was most opportune to stress Argead connections to the Peloponnese.<sup>31</sup> Although perhaps

---

la grecque’, as Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago IL 2002) 156 puts it.

<sup>28</sup> Eugene Borza, ‘Athenians, Macedonians, and the origins of the Macedonian royal house’, in *Studies in Attic Epigraphy, History and Topography: Presented to Eugene Vanderpool. Hesperia Supp.* (Princeton 1982) 7-13 (10).

<sup>29</sup> Thucydides offers notes, in passing, on Perdiccas’ struggles to maintain his position in the face of pressure from Athens (see 1.56-63; 2.29.6, 80.7, 93-102; 5.80.2, 83.4 and 6.7.3), repeated invasions by Sitalces the Thracian king (2.95-101), and the defiance of the Lyncestians from Upper Macedonia (see 4.79, 83, 124-128). For a review see Joseph Roisman, ‘Classical Macedonia to Perdiccas III’, in Roisman & Worthington (eds.), *Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (n.21) 145-165 (146-154).

<sup>30</sup> Bypassing Temenus and emphasising a descent from Heracles directly, see Ann M. Nicogorski, ‘The magic knot of Herakles and the propaganda of Alexander the Great’, in L. Rawlings & H. Bowden (eds.), *Herakles and Hercules: Exploring a Graeco-Roman Divinity* (Swansea 2005) 97-128 (105). On Perdiccas’ coinage see Doris Raymond, *Macedonian Regal Coinage to 413 BC* (New York 1953) 148-165, and Sophia Kremydi, ‘Coinage and finance’, in R.J. Lane Fox (ed.), *Brill’s Companion to Ancient Macedon. Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon, 650 BC - 300 AD* (Leiden 2011) 159-178.

<sup>31</sup> Thucydides himself offers the opinion that Perdiccas preferred this new alliance because ‘his own family was originally from Argos’ (ἦν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐξ Ἄργου 5.80.2). Hammond & Grif-

born of immediate diplomatic needs, this Heracles-type would become standard on the coins of later kings: from Perdiccas down to Alexander the Great and beyond, the Macedonians included the head of Heracles in his lionskin (whether bearded or unbearded) on their coins to symbolize their own royal legitimacy and authority.<sup>32</sup>

In the last decades of the fifth century BC, Perdiccas' successor produced further issues with the image of Heracles, and made even stronger assertions of that Argead origin myth. Archelaus was another philhellenic king of note, who – like Alexander I – Hellenized his court at a time when Macedonian and Greek interests were again contiguous.<sup>33</sup> It was to this king's court, for example, that Euripides journeyed late in his life, and where he produced a commission piece for this patron – a tragic play called the *Archelaus* – in about 408 BC. And, once again, this was a piece that went to great lengths to detail the genealogy of the Macedonian royal family. Two of the more informative fragments that survive come from the opening of the *Archelaus*, where Euripides establishes a mythical 'Archelaus' as both the founder of the Argead royal line and a descendant of Heracles:<sup>34</sup>

(ΑΡΧΕΛΑΟΣ)

<p>Δαναὸς ὁ πενήκοντα θυγατέρων πατήρ          Νείλου λιπῶν κάλλιστον †ἐκ γαίας† ὕδωρ,          [ὅς ἐκ μελαμβρότοιο πληροῦται ῥοὰς          Αἰθιοπίδος γῆς, ἥνικ' ἄν τακῆι χιῶν          †τεθριππεύοντος† ἡλίου κατ' αἰθέρα,]</p>	<p>(1)</p> <p>(5)</p>	<p>Danaus, father of fifty daughters,          left the most beautiful waters of the Nile †from the earth†          [which fills its streams from the Ethiopian land          of dark-skinned people, when the snow melts          and the sun †drives his chariot† through the sky.]</p>	<p>(1)</p> <p>(5)</p>
---	-----------------------	---	-----------------------

fifth, *History of Macedonia II* (n.25) 120-121 situate the Heracles issue (and the clear connection between royal house and hero) in this context.

<sup>32</sup> On the later circulation of the Heracles coin-type, see Otto Mørkholm & Ulla Westermark, *Early Hellenistic Coinage from the Accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea (336-188 BC)* (Cambridge 1991) 43, and Nicogorski, 'The magic knot of Herakles' (n.30) 105-107.

<sup>33</sup> For details of Archelaus' reign see Hammond & Griffith, *History of Macedonia II* (n.25) 137-141 and, primarily, Borza, *Shadow of Olympus* (n.5) 161-179. Also W.S. Greenwalt, 'The production of coinage from Archelaus to Perdiccas III and the evolution of Argead Macedonia', in I. Worthington (eds.), *Ventures into Greek History* (Oxford 1994) 105-134.

<sup>34</sup> See Christopher Collard, Martin Cropp, & John Gibert, *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays. Volume II* (Oxford 2004) 338-341.

ἐλθὼν ἐς Ἄργος ὄικισ' Ἰνάχου πόλιν·  
 Πελασγιώτας δ' ὄνομασμένους τὸ πρὶν  
 Δαναοὺς καλεῖσθαι νόμον ἔθηκ' ἄν' Ἑλλάδα  
 Nauck<sup>2</sup> 228

.....οὐκ ἔψαυσε· Λυγκέως.....

Ἄ[β]ας ἐγένετο· τοῦ δὲ δίπτυχον γένο[ς]· (5)

Προῖτος μανε[ι]σῶν θυγατέρων τρισσῶν πατήρ  
 ὃς τ' ἐγκατῆγεν χαλκέωι νυμφεύμα[τι]

Δανάην ... θεῖς ... Ἀκρίσιός ποτε.

Δανάης δὲ Περσεὺς ἐγένετ' ἐκ χρυσορρῦτων  
 σταγόνων, ὃς ἐλθὼν Γοργόνος κατατόμος (10)

Αἰθίοπ' ἔγημεν Ἀνδρομέδαν τὴν Κηφέως,  
 ἢ τριπτύχους ἐγείνατ' ἐκ Περσέως κόρους·

Ἀλκαῖον ἠδὲ Σθένελλον, ὃς γ' Ἄργους πόλιν  
 ἔ[σ]χεν Μυκίνας, πατέρα δ' Ἀλκμήνης τρίτον

Ἥλεκτρώνα· Ζ[ε]ῦς δ' ἐς Ἀλκμήνης λέχος (15)  
 πε[σ]ῶν τὸ κλει[ὸ]ν Ἡρακλέους σπείρει δέμας.

Ἵλλος δὲ τοῦδ[ε], Τήμενος δ' Ἵλλου πατρός,  
 ὃς Ἄργος ὄικησ' Ἡρακλέους γεγῶς ἄπο.

ἄπαιδία δὲ χρώμενος πατήρ ἐμὸς  
 Τήμενος ἐς ἀγνῆς ἦλθε Δωδώνης πτύχας (20)

τέκνων ἔρωτι· τῆς δ' ὁμωνύμου Διὸς  
 πρόπολ[ο]ς Διώνης εἶπε Τημένωι τάδε·

ἽΩ παῖ πεφυκῶς ἐκ γονῶν Ἡρακλέους,  
 Ζεὺς σ[οι] δίδωσι παῖδ', ἐγὼ μαντεύομαι

ὄν Ἀρχ[έλ]αον χρῆ καλεῖν α[ ] [ ] [ ] (25)  
 PHamb 118a (col.II)

He came to the Argolid and founded the city of Inachus,  
 and he established the custom throughout Greece  
 who had been called inhabitants Pelasgians before  
 should now be called Danaans

.....did not touch: from Lynceus...

Abas was born. His offspring was twofold: (5)

Proitus, father of the three daughters who were driven mad,  
 and Acrisius, who once led....

...Danae down into a bronze bridal chamber...

Perseus was born of Danae from the golden-flowing  
 drops, Having severed the Gorgon's head, he went (10)  
 to Ethiopia and married Andromeda daughter of Cepheus.

She bore Perseus three sons:

Alcaeus, Sthenelus, who acquired

Mycenae the Argive city, and third Electryon

Alcmene's father. Zeus entered the bed of Alcmene (15)  
 and begat the glorious Heracles.

His son was Hyllus, and from Hyllus was born Temenus,  
 who resumed residence at Argos as a descendant of Hera-  
 cles.

Since he was childless, my father Temenus  
 went to the fold of holy Dodona (20)

out of a desire for children, and the priestess of Dione,  
 namesake of Zeus, said this to Temenus:

"Child born of the offspring of Heracles,

Zeus gives you a child, I prophesy,

Who must be called Archelaus... (25)

Of particular note in this long prologue is how Euripides further develops the link between the royal house, Argos, and the Temenids established in the reign of Alexander I. The *Archelaus* again traces the Macedonian king's royal line – starting with Danaus and taking in the tales of, among others, Perseus, Alcmene, Hyllus, and Temenus – but this time back through eleven generations, with the 'glorious

Heracles' himself mentioned three times in the second fragment (lines 16, 18, and 23). The piece ends finally with details of the birth of a 'mythical' Archelaus, the new founder of the Macedonian monarchy. This is the most important innovation in the piece, that it establishes the mythical 'Archelaus' as the son of Temenus – a birth announced by the priestess of Dodona, that completes the family history of this ruling dynasty.<sup>35</sup>

All of which was no idle flattery or contrived fiction; such foundation myths were of importance to the Macedonians rulers themselves, and in their external dealings with the rest of the Greek world. Moreover, the genealogy of the ruling house of the Argead kings was also a vital concern within the kingdom at the end of the fifth century. The *Archelaus* presents a deliberate, re-presentation of a quite specific Macedonian royal pedigree, the point of which was perhaps aimed at the domestic audience. Evidence that Archelaus' legitimacy, not only as king but also as a son of Perdiccas II, was challenged, comes from Plato's *Gorgias* (470c9-471d2). Although not historical, Plato's story of Archelaus – the illegitimate son of a slave-girl, who usurped the throne by killing his uncle – may reflect something of a hostile contemporary tradition opposed to the king's rule. This presentation of a Heraclid pedigree for Archelaus perhaps compares to the situation at Sparta, where king-lists were established almost as a special kind of 'genealogical charter' that served to honour the Agiads and Eurypon-tids, and confirm those families in their leading political positions.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, given the fierce competition between different branches of the Argead clan, those with rival ambitions for the Macedonian

---

<sup>35</sup> On the background to Euripides' stay in Macedonia, see E.P. Moloney "Philippos in acie tutor quam in theatro fuit..." (Curtius 9.6.25). The Macedonian kings and Greek theatre", in E. Csapo, H.R. Goette, J.R. Green, & P.J. Wilson (eds.) *Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century BC* (Berlin 2014) 231-248 (234-240). More on the *Archelaus* in Georgia Xanthakis-Karamanos, 'The *Archelaus* of Euripides: reconstruction and motifs', in D. Rosenbloom & J. Davidson (eds.) *Greek Drama IV. Texts, Contexts, Performance* (Oxford 2012) 108-126.

<sup>36</sup> See Huttner, *Die politische Rolle der Heraklesgestalt* (n.23) 43-64 on Heracles and the Spartan kings. Although a descent from the great hero was claimed by all Lacedaemonians, only the Agiads and Eurypontids were supplied with a detailed pedigree to confirm their particular right to rule. Attempts by Lysander to extend the kingship even to 'those judged liked Heracles in *aretê*' (Plut. *Lys.* 24.5) were not successful.

throne sought any grounds upon which they could establish their claim to power. Euripides' *Archelaus* is an early example of the tactic of dynastic revision, which would later become a common practice among successive Argead monarchs who sought to validate their rule by revising the royal ancestral line.<sup>37</sup>

Although the evidence for this period of early-Macedonian history is often irregular, there are just enough examples of the Argead invocation of Heracles – from Alexander to Archelaus and for various political ends – to warrant further consideration; consideration of the ways in which the great hero was appropriated as a key part of a self-fashioned identity of the Macedonian royal house. Heracles was used to legitimate the Argead family's exclusive claims to domestic sovereignty, in the face of challenges from rival nobles, and also to assert that ruling dynasty's authority in (and over) a disparate kingdom that was disjointed right down to the reign of Philip II. Beyond the borders of the kingdom, the affiliation with Heracles would also ease early-Argead exchanges both with Hellenic powers (Thessalian, Spartan, Athenian, and Argive) and non-Greek neighbours (in regional exchanges with Thracians and Illyrians). Indeed, the adaptable Heracles' essential double-sidedness – this far-ranging son of Thebes, human and divine, civilized and cruel – made him the ideal figure for Macedonians to invoke when seeking points of contact with different communities.<sup>38</sup>

That these Macedonian kings established and exploited a distinguished Heraclid pedigree, using Heracles himself as a mediating figure within a 'shifting discourse of power, conquest and legiti-

---

<sup>37</sup> Hammond & Griffith, *History of Macedonia II* (n.25) 5-11 suggest that Euripides' tragedy was the prototype in this respect. William Greenwalt, 'The introduction of Caranus into the Argead king list', *GRBS* 26 (1985) 43-49 points out that in 390's BC, especially, a rivalry developed between three different branches of the Argead family, each of which was 'concerned with the official record of early Macedonian history. Undoubtedly, this interest derived from a desire to strengthen their claim to authority by appealing to the past. This suggests that individual Argead kings hoped to enhance their status by glorifying their royal heritage as much as possible' (49).

<sup>38</sup> Thalia Papadopoulou, *Heracles and Euripidean Tragedy* (Cambridge 2005) 6 notes that Heracles was at once a culture hero (dearest of men to Zeus, *Il.* 18.118), a positive civilising force (humankind's champion in Pindar *Nem.* 1.62-6), and also a cruel worker of violence (dangerous and destructive in *Hom. Il.* 5.403-4; *Od.* 21.25-31).

macy that could be directed at Greeks and barbarians’ – and did so as capably as any later Classical or Hellenistic monarch – may surprise.<sup>39</sup> But these Argeads were the first to challenge, and attempt to change, the ancient presentation of the Macedonian kingdom and its court. It was they who established a rich set of associations for the likes of Philip II and Alexander III – and those engaging with these later kings in turn – to work with. Of course, from Herodotus to Theopompus, many would still dispute the Argead presentation of their line as the ‘Greekest’ of all, and attitudes towards the Macedonians remained decidedly ambiguous.<sup>40</sup> But these early kings did at least establish a basis for future relations to develop, when the interests of the Macedonians and the other Greeks aligned and when arguments in favour of more expansive policies held sway on each side.<sup>41</sup> Although Philip and Alexander were *the* great Macedonian innovators and reformers of note, it is important to recognise that each also maintained a degree of continuity with their Argead past, and that both these later kings worked with, and within, established paradigms and perceptions when asserting their Heraclid connections.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Borrowing from the fine consideration of the manipulation of Melqart-Herakles-Hercules concepts by Carthaginians, Greeks, and Romans in Louis Rawling, ‘Hannibal and Hercules’, in Rawlings & Bowden (eds.), *Herakles and Hercules* (n.30) 153-184 (166).

<sup>40</sup> Demosthenes rejects Aeschines’ presentation of Philip II as ‘the most Greek of men, by Heracles, the finest speaker, and Athens’ greatest friend’ (εἶναι τε τὸν Φίλιππον αὐτόν, Ἡράκλεις, ἑλληνικώτατον ἀνθρώπων, δεινότατον λέγειν, φιλαθηναϊότατον *On the False Embassy* (19) 308). For an analysis of the Greek response to Argead presentations, see Sulochana Asirvatham’s excellent ‘Perspectives on the Macedonians from Greece, Rome, and beyond’, in Roisman & Worthington (eds.), *Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (n.21) 99-123 (100-107).

<sup>41</sup> The impact of these philhellenic policies is debatable, but Tanja Scheer suggests that by the time of Philip II the Argead ancestry was ‘largely recognised’. See ‘The past in a Hellenistic present: myth and local tradition’, in A. Erskine (ed.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 216-231 (218). Similarly, for Asirvatham, ‘Perspectives on the Macedonians’ (n.40), by the time Alexander III attained the throne, this young king may no longer ‘have felt the need to prove his ethnic Greekness and cultural education’ (101).

<sup>42</sup> Again, the Argead ‘identity’ does not just emerge fully formed in the middle of the fourth century BC. See C.M. Antonaccio, ‘(Re)defining ethnicity: culture, material culture, and identity’, in S. Hales & T. Hodos eds., *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World* (Cambridge 2010) 32-53: ‘...the notion that ‘individuals’ freely constructed themselves from whatever material was in exist-

The importance of the Heraclid archetype, and how it helped to facilitate a two-way dialogue between Macedonian kings and the Greeks, is most apparent during the rule of Philip II; even though this was one Argead who perhaps placed less emphasis on his heroic ancestry. In an important work on the political influence of the Heracles figure, Ulrich Huttner suggests that Philip seems to have distrusted myth-based arguments in his public presentations and, as a result, tended not to exploit his ‘Heraklidentum’ systematically.<sup>43</sup> However, as Emma Stafford points out, if there is ‘little evidence of Philip promoting the family link to Herakles, it was certainly picked up on by others who were anxious to gain his favour’; indeed, it is hard to accept that the many manipulations of the Heracles myth that we see in this period were solely the work of agents outside of Macedonia.<sup>44</sup>

Certainly we still find the use of the Heracles head on coins produced in the kingdom during Philip’s reign, with that familiar type still issued even among coins with representations of Apollo, Artemis, Zeus, and the king’s himself too.<sup>45</sup> But we do see the image of the Heraclid ruler most clearly

---

ence in the same time, space, and place is not tenable... Cultures may not always have firm rules, but in order to be coherent there is patterning that, while malleable to some degree, is not infinitely flexible’ (37).

<sup>43</sup> Huttner, *Die politische Rolle der Heraklesgestalt* (n.23) 65-85: ‘Dafür, daß Philipp selbst sein Heraklidentum als Instrument der Propaganda in den politischen Auseinandersetzungen jener Zeit eingesetzt hätte, gibt es keinen Beleg. Womöglich hat er auf dem Mythos basierenden Argumenten mißtraut’ (85).

<sup>44</sup> Emma Stafford, *Herakles* (London & New York 2012) 143, and similar observations made by Stefan Ritter, ‘Review of *Die politische Rolle der Heraklesgestalt im griechischen Herrschertum* by Ulrich Huttner’, *Gnomon* 72.4 (2000) 337-343 (339).

<sup>45</sup> See Ulla Westermark, ‘Remarks on the regal Macedonian coinage ca.413-359 BC’, in G. Le Rider, K. Jenkins, N. Waggoner, & U. Westermark (eds.), *Kraay-Mørkholm Essays: Numismatic Studies in Memory of C.M. Kraay and O. Mørkholm* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1989) 301-315. On the continued production of coins of the ‘old type’ (with Heracles/tripod) at Philippi, for example, see Karsten Dahmen, ‘The numismatic evidence’, in Roisman & Worthington (eds.), *Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (n.21) 41-62 (50).

through the eyes of others who sought to court the favour of this Argead king. As in the private letter addressed to the Macedonian in c.342 BC by Speusippus, Plato's nephew and head of the Academy. Soliciting for protection and patronage for one Antipater of Magnesia, Speusippus promotes his associate's recently-completed compilation of the exploits of Heracles.<sup>46</sup> Referring specifically to the recent conquest of cities in northern Greece and the Argead's admission onto the Amphictyonic Council, Speusippus promises that Antipater's work will help to justify these activities: the links to Heracles provide Philip with many 'arguments with the strength to help your rule' (λόγοι δυνάμενοι τὴν σὴν ἀρχὴν ὠφελεῖεν *Ep. Socr.* 30.8).<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, Theopompus opened his lost *Philippica* with words of high praise for Philip – 'Europe never bore such a man at all as Philip, the son of Amyntas' (μηδέποτε τὴν Εὐρώπην ἐνηνοχέσαι τοιοῦτον ἄνδρα παράπαν οἷον τὸν Ἀμύντου Φίλιππον *FGrH* 115 F27) – and goes on to supply another version of the Argead genealogy that links the king's ancestry back to Heracles:

οὗτος ὁ Κάρανος ἀπὸ μὲν Ἡρακλέους ἰα ἦν, ἀπὸ δὲ Τημένου...ἕβδομος. γεναλογοῦσι δ' αὐτὸν οὕτως, ὡς φησιν ὁ Διόδωρος <καὶ> οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν συγγραφέων, ὧν εἷς καὶ Θεόπομπος. Κάρανος Φεΐδωνος τοῦ Ἀριστοδαμίδα τοῦ Μέρωπος τοῦ Θεσπίου τοῦ Κισσίου τοῦ Τημένου τοῦ Ἀριστομάχου τοῦ Κλεαδάτους τοῦ Ὑλλου τοῦ Ἡρακλεους.

'This Caranus was the eleventh from Heracles and...the seventh from Temenus. His genealogy is given by Diodorus and most of the historians – of whom one is Theopompus – as follows: Caranus, son of Phidon, son of Aristodamides, son of Merops, son of

---

<sup>46</sup> See A.F. Natoli, *The Letter of Speusippus to Philip II* (Stuttgart 2004) 68-73 on the presentation of Heracles in the letter.

<sup>47</sup> In particular, Speusippus promises that Antipater's work will establish the legitimacy of the Argead claims to Amphipolis, claims that predate those of the Athenians (*Ep. Socr.* 30.6-7). See M.M. Markle III, 'Support of Athenian intellectuals for Philip: a study of Isocrates *Philippus* and Speusippus' *Letter to Philip*', *JHS* 96 (1976) 80-99 (93-96), and Hammond & Griffith, *History of Macedonia II* (n.25) 514-517.

Thestius, son of Cissius, son of Temenus, son of Aristomachus, son of Cleadates, son of Hyllus, son of Heracles.’ (*FGrHist* 115 F393)<sup>48</sup>

This outline brings us back through ten generations to Heracles, the founder of the Argead line; not quite the fourteen generations in the prologue of the *Archelaus*, and also with a certain Caranus now installed as the legendary first king of Macedon.<sup>49</sup> In Theopompus, Philip is established as a king of the finest lineage, although the Chian historian does subsequently undercut that presentation by exposing the Argead king as wholly unworthy of his ancestors.<sup>50</sup>

However, a much more positive presentation of Philip as a venerable Heraclid is offered by Isocrates in a public letter addressed to the Macedonian king in 346 BC. In the *Philip*, Isocrates seeks to present himself as both an adviser to the Macedonian king and a representative of Hellenic interests as he urges Philip to unite and lead the Greeks in a common war against the Persian Empire. Of course, Isocrates had previously issued similar Panhellenic calls to rouse Agesilaus, Dionysius, Alexander of Pherae, and perhaps Archidamus also.<sup>51</sup> But Isocrates turns now to the Macedonians, and in another symbouleutic piece the old orator’s advice falls into two main parts, with the example of Heracles key in both. First, Philip is urged to help put an end to war among the Greeks by promoting har-

---

<sup>48</sup> See G.S. Shrimpton, *Theopompus the Historian* (Montreal 1991) 270. M.A. Flower, *Theopompus of Chios: History and Rhetoric in the Fourth Century BC* (Oxford 1994) 101-102 on the place of this genealogy in the *Philippica*.

<sup>49</sup> Earlier in the fourth century BC, Caranus (‘lord’) replaced Archelaus, who replaced Herodotus’ Perdikkas, as a more ‘neutral’ founder in the Argead register. See Greenwalt, ‘The introduction of Caranus into the Argead king list’, (n.37) 48-49.

<sup>50</sup> Flower, *Theopompus of Chios* (n.48) 105 on the infamous presentation of Philip in the fragments as a ‘fast-living, impetuous, and uncouth individual...he was thoroughly and completely debauched’. Philip proved to be ‘a Greek with a pedigree that went back to Heracles who lived as a barbarian among barbarians’, as Shrimpton, *Theopompus the Historian* (n.48) 109 puts it.

<sup>51</sup> As Speusippus notes in his own letter to Philip (*Ep. Socr.* 30.13). For a discussion of Isocrates’ proposals, see Michael Weißenberger, ‘Isokrates und der Plan eines panhellenischen Perserkrieges’, in W. Orth (ed.), *Isokrates. Neue Ansätze zur Bewertung eines politischen Schriftstellers* (Trier 2003) 95-110.

mony (ὁμόνοια) between cities in the Hellenic world (*To Philip* 30-80); then Philip is urged to lead a Panhellenic campaign against the Persian empire (*To Philip* 83-155).<sup>52</sup>

In the call for the Macedonian to save the Greeks from themselves, Isocrates identifies Philip as the ideal man to unite the *poleis*, for the king's Argead lineage ties him to each of the other key powers in southern Greece. Philip is advised:

Γνοίης δ' ἂν ὡς οὐδεμιᾶς σοι προσήκει τούτων ὀλιγωρεῖν, ἣν ἀνελέγκης αὐτῶν τὰς πράξεις ἐπὶ τοὺς σοὺς προγόνους· εὐρήσεις γὰρ ἐκάστη πολλὴν φιλίαν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ μεγάλας εὐεργεσίας ὑπαρχούσας. Ἄργος μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ σοι πατρίς, ἧς δίκαιον τοσαύτην σε ποιεῖσθαι πρόνοιαν ὅσην περ τῶν γονέων τῶν σουτοῦ· Θηβαῖοι δὲ τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τοῦ γένους ὑμῶν τιμῶσι καὶ ταῖς προσόδοις καὶ ταῖς θυσίαις μᾶλλον ἢ τοὺς θεοὺς τοὺς ἄλλους· Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ τοῖς ἀπ' ἐκείνου γεγονόσι καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν εἰς ἅπαντα τὸν χρόνον δεδώκασι· τὴν δὲ πόλιν τὴν ἡμετέραν φασίν, οἷς περὶ τῶν παλαιῶν πιστεύομεν, Ἡρακλεῖ μὲν συναιτίαν γενέσθαι τῆς ἀθανασίας (ὄν δὲ τρόπον, σοὶ μὲν αὖθις πυθέσθαι ῥάδιον, ἐμοὶ δὲ νῦν εἰπεῖν οὐ καιρός), τοῖς δὲ παισὶ τοῖς ἐκείνου τῆς σωτηρίας.

'You should realize that it is inappropriate for you to slight any of these cities when you consider their behaviour toward your ancestors. You will find that each has great friendship for your country and has done it great kindnesses. Argos, for one, is your ancestral home, and it is right that you have as much regard for it as you would for your own ancestors. The Thebans honour the founder of your race with public expenditures and sacrifices more than any other god. The Spartans have bestowed kingship and leadership for all time on his descendants. Finally, reliable authorities on ancient matters say that our city was partly responsible for Heracles' immortality... and also responsible for the safety of his offspring. (Isocrates, *To Philip* 32-33)

---

<sup>52</sup> On the structure of the argument in this letter, see Gunther Heilbrunn, 'Isocrates on rhetoric and power', *Hermes* 103.2 (1975) 154-178 (156).

Argos, Thebes, Sparta, and Athens are all linked to Heracles, and through him to the Argead clan.<sup>53</sup> For the Athenian orator, Philip's status as a Heraclid works both ways, the weight of the Argead ancestry imposes duties and obligations on the Macedonian king in turn. Attempting to balance Macedonian and Hellenic interests, Isocrates employs the model of Heracles to prescribe, and even limit, the extent of Philip's dominance over the *poleis*, while also emphasising the shared background between all that would 'support requests for reciprocal favours – returning benefits and punishing past injuries'.<sup>54</sup> Isocrates finishes the first part of his discourse by reminding both his immediate addressee and the extended audience that Philip's forefather was once the 'benefactor of all Hellas' (76): Heracles – the εὐεργέτης Ἑλλάδος – is again the model proposed for Philip's future actions and dealings with the major Greek powers.<sup>55</sup>

Once the Macedonian king has established 'concord' (ὁμόνοια) between the Greek cities, Isocrates then urges Philip to turn his power against the Persian empire, and launch the Panhellenic campaign anticipated earlier in the letter: 'I am about to advise you to stand at the head of a Greek alliance and lead a campaign against the barbarians' (μέλλω γάρ σοι συμβουλεύειν προστῆναι τῆς τε τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὁμονοίας καὶ τῆς ἐπὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους στρατείας 16).<sup>56</sup> Urging Philip to imitate (μιμήσασθαι

---

<sup>53</sup> On Heracles and Athens see Terry Papillon, *Isocrates II* (Austin 2004) 82 n.25: 'Isocrates describes Athens' aid to the children of Heracles against Eurysthus in *Panegyricus* (4.54-60) and *Panathenaicus* (12.194)'.

<sup>54</sup> Bernd Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse: Uses and Meanings of the Past* (Ann Arbor 2013) 269. Isocrates repositions competing narratives from different accounts in order to establish a general mythic background.

<sup>55</sup> On myth as a key factor in ancient diplomacy, see Hans-Joachim Gehrke, 'Myth, history, and collective identity: uses of the past in ancient Greece and beyond', in N. Luraghi (ed.), *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus* (Oxford 2001) 286-313; 291-292, in particular, considers the importance of 'good deeds' (εὐεργεσία) in dealings between Greek states.

<sup>56</sup> Considerations of ὁμόνοια were standard in epideictic oratory (as Isocrates notes in *Panegyricus* 3), but Heilbrunn, 'Isocrates on rhetoric and power' (n.52), notes a shift in the meaning of ὁμόνοια as an ideal in Isocrates, 'from a term denoting harmony within the city to harmony between cities' (156 n.6). For Jacqueline de Romilly, 'Isocrates and Europe', *Greece & Rome* 39.1 (1992) 2-13, Isocrates' ideas

114) the example of past heroes in a new Asian campaign, we might perhaps expect Isocrates to highlight the great deeds of the Homeric heroes to inspire the Macedonian. Certainly the great exemplar for such an undertaking in the Isocratean corpus is Agamemnon, identified in the *Panathenaicus* as a king who ‘had not one or two virtues but all that one could mention’ (οὐ μίαν οὐδὲ δύο σχόντα μόνον ἀρετάς, ἀλλὰ πάσας ὅσας ἂν ἔχοι τις εἰπεῖν *Panathenaicus* 72). In a revision of Homer, the son of Atreus receives lengthy and lavish praise as a true Panhellenic champion, who:

...οὐκ ἔστιν ἦν τινα τῶν Ἑλληνίδων πόλεων ἐλύπησεν, ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἦν πόρρω τοῦ περὶ  
τινας ἐξαμαρτεῖν, ὥστε παραλαβὼν τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ ταραχαῖς καὶ πολλοῖς  
κακοῖς ὄντας τούτων μὲν αὐτοὺς ἀπήλλαξεν, εἰς ὁμόνοιαν δὲ καταστήσας τὰ μὲν  
περιττὰ τῶν ἔργων καὶ τερατώδη καὶ μηδὲν ὠφελούντα τοὺς ἄλλους ὑπερεΐδε,  
στρατόπεδον δὲ συστήσας ἐπὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους ἤγαγεν. τούτου δὲ κάλλιον στρατήγημα  
καὶ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ὠφελιμώτερον οὐδεὶς φανήσεται πράξας οὔτε τῶν κατ’ ἐκεῖνον τὸν  
χρόνον εὐδοκιμησάντων οὔτε τῶν ὕστερον ἐπιγενομένων.

‘...did not injure a single Greek city but rather was so far from wronging any of them that, finding the Greeks in war and turmoil and many difficulties, he relieved them of these troubles and established harmony among them; he ignored tasks that would be amazing and wondrous but of no practical use to anyone and instead formed an army and led it against the barbarians. You will find no one, either among the best of that time or those who followed, who has made a more noble campaign than this, or one more beneficial to the Greeks. (Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 77-78).

But in the *Philip*, the Athenian orator spares no time on the ancient ruler of Mycenae in dispensing his advice to the Macedonian king.<sup>57</sup> Instead, Isocrates makes very particular and very pointed reference to the *first* Trojan War, and Heracles’ ‘original’ campaign,<sup>58</sup> reminding Philip that:

---

on harmony not ‘only suppose that one doesn’t encroach on the other’s freedom, but that one accepts a number of restrictions for a general advantage’ (10).

<sup>57</sup> See Yun Lee Too, *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates: Text, Power, Pedagogy* (Cambridge 1995) 132-133, dismissing suggestions that Agamemnon in Isocrates’ *Panathenaicus* (74-87) ‘serves as a

Ἐκεῖνος γὰρ ὄρων τὴν Ἑλλάδα πολέμων καὶ στάσεων καὶ πολλῶν ἄλλων κακῶν μεστὴν οὖσαν, παύσας ταῦτα καὶ διαλλάξας τὰς πόλεις πρὸς ἀλλήλας ὑπέδειξε τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις, μεθ' ὧν χρῆ καὶ πρὸς οὓς δεῖ τοὺς πολέμους ἐκφέρειν. ποιησάμενος γὰρ στρατείαν ἐπὶ Τροίαν, ἣ περ εἶχε τότε μεγίστην δύναμιν τῶν περὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν, τοσοῦτον διήνεγκε τῇ στρατηγίᾳ τῶν πρὸς τὴν αὐτὴν ταύτην ὕστερον πολεμησάντων, ὅσον οἱ μὲν μετὰ τῆς τῶν Ἑλλήνων δυνάμεως ἐν ἔτεσι δέκα μόλις αὐτὴν ἐξεπολιόρκησαν, ὁ δ' ἐν ἡμέραις ἐλάττωσιν ἢ τοσαύταις καὶ μετ' ὀλίγων στρατεύσας ῥαδίως αὐτὴν κατὰ κράτος εἶλεν...

Τούτου δ' ἔνεκά σοι περὶ τούτων διῆλθον, ἵνα γνῶς ὅτι σε τυγχάνω τῷ λόγῳ παρακαλῶν ἐπὶ τοιαύτας πράξεις, ἅς ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων οἱ πρόγονοί σου φαίνονται καλλίστας προκρίναντες. ἅπαντας μὲν οὖν χρῆ τοὺς νοῦν ἔχοντας τὸν κράτιστον ὑποστησαμένους πειρᾶσθαι γίγνεσθαι τοιούτους, μάλιστα δὲ σοὶ προσήκει. τὸ γὰρ μὴ δεῖν ἀλλοτρίοις χρῆσθαι παραδείγμασιν, ἀλλ' οἰκεῖον ὑπάρχειν, πῶς οὐκ εἰκὸς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ σε παροξύνεσθαι, καὶ φιλονικεῖν ὅπως τῷ προγόνῳ σαυτὸν ὅμοιον παρασκευάσεις;

‘When Heracles saw that Greece was beset by wars and factional strife and many other evils, he put an end to these and reconciled the cities with one another and then, as an example to future generations, revealed which cities one should have as allies and which as enemies when making war. For he launched an expedition against Troy, which at that time had the greatest force in all Asia, and as a military strategist, he was so superior to those who later made the same campaign that although it was difficult for them

---

second protreptic model for Philip’. Also William H. Race, ‘*Panathenaicus* 74-90: the rhetoric of Isocrates’ digression on Agamemnon’, *TAPhA* (1978) 175-185: again, Race does not see any veiled references to Philip in the *Panathenaicus*; instead Isocrates’ digression ‘constitutes a sophisticated rhetorical showpiece which is meant to attest to the orator’s personal character and set forth...a paradigm for constructive political action’ (185).

<sup>58</sup> See Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology* 2.5.9 and 2.6.4 for the sack of Troy by Heracles and Telamon. Summaries in Stafford, *Herakles* (n.44), 70-72, and Papillon, *Isocrates II* (n.53) 99 n.70.

with a Greek army to capture the city in ten years, he, with just a few men, easily took it by force in less than ten days...

I have related these events so that you might know that I am urging you by this discourse to undertake great deeds like those that your ancestors by their actions clearly judged the best. Therefore, although all men of good sense must set for themselves the finest example and then try to become like it, this is especially fitting for you. You do not need to use external examples but have one in your own family, so how can you not naturally be inspired by Heracles, with the ambition to show yourself equal to your ancestor?' (Isocrates, *To Philip* 111-113)

The rhetoric rises in this section with the call for Philip to show himself worthy of Heracles, perhaps forming the highpoint of the letter. But, even so, the responsibilities of the *hégemon* do not end here for Isocrates. Even beyond the grand campaign, even after a glorious victory, the Argead king must finally relieve the miseries of Greece by planting colonies of its mercenaries in the newly-claimed lands of Asia Minor. Isocrates pushes further, maintaining:

ἔστιν οὖν ἀνδρὸς μέγα φρονουῦντος καὶ φιλέλληνος καὶ πορρωτέρω τῶν ἄλλων τῇ  
διανοίᾳ καθορῶντος, ἀποχρησάμενον τοῖς τοιοῦτοις πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους, καὶ χώραν  
ἀποτεμόμενον τοσαύτην ὅσην ὀλίγω πρότερον εἰρήκαμεν, ἀπαλλάξαι τε τοὺς  
ξενιτευομένους τῶν κακῶν ὧν αὐτοὶ τ' ἔχουσι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις παρέχουσι, καὶ πόλεις ἐξ  
αὐτῶν συστήσαι, καὶ ταύταις ὀρίσαι τὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ προβαλέσθαι πρὸς ἀπάντων ἡμῶν.

'...it is the job of a man with high ambition, with a concern for Greece, and with a more accomplished intellect than other men, to use men such as these against the barbarians, to cut away that portion of the territory we just mentioned, and to free the mercenaries of the troubles they now have, and which they also cause for others, to found cities with these men, to give a boundary to Greece, and to make these cities into a buffer zone for us all.' (Isocrates, *To Philip* 122)

And, again, Heracles – the great ‘culture hero’ – proves to be the ‘ideal role model for the Greeks who took to their ships to found colonies overseas.’<sup>59</sup> As Irad Malkin notes, the Heracles of the Archaic period may not have been a colonizing hero and a city-founder; but the role of the god-hero (and his descendants) did shift, from ‘the Homeric wild man and arrogant warrior...in later periods to a civilising hero and founder’.<sup>60</sup> Again, for Isocrates, who better than a Heraclid to accomplish the final task of his great proposal? Ultimately, at each key point of his address to the Macedonian king, Isocrates chooses the god-hero as the exemplar of heroic action most appropriate for the Argead, selecting these Heracles stories in order ‘to give Philip a pattern upon which to shape his life and actions’.<sup>61</sup>

Of course, drawing attention to the initiative Isocrates tries to take in his letter is not to revive claims that the Athenian’s proposals (made here and elsewhere) strongly influenced the policies of the Macedonian king. No doubt Philip had plans and ambitions of his own, in which thoughts of Isocrates and his writings played very little part.<sup>62</sup> Certainly, these ideas of a ‘crusade’ against the Persians were neither new nor exclusive to Isocrates.<sup>63</sup> It is more likely that, as Michael Flower notes, ‘the panhellen-

---

<sup>59</sup> Stafford, *Herakles* (n.44) 156, who also notes the twenty-three different ancient cities across the Mediterranean called ‘Heracleia’ that we find in Stephanus of Byzantium’s *Ethnica* (303-304).

<sup>60</sup> Malkin, *A Small Greek World* (n.23) 119-141 for a full discussion of Heracles as a key ‘networking hero’ (quote here from 132).

<sup>61</sup> See Terry Papillon, ‘Isocrates and the use of myth’, in *Hermathena* 161 (1996) 9-21, and, in particular the excellent discussion of the use of myth in *To Philip* (11-13).

<sup>62</sup> Lynette Mitchell, ‘Isocrates’, in G. Shipley, J. Vanderspoel, D. Mattingly, & L. Foxhall (eds.) *The Cambridge Dictionary of Classical Civilization* (Cambridge 2006) 467. Isocrates himself says he is unaware of any influence he may have had (*Letter to Philip* 2.3). For a review of arguments see Michael Flower, ‘Alexander the Great and Panhellenism’, in Bosworth & Baynham (eds.), *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (n.22) 96-135 (102-106, 126), and Weißenberger, ‘Isokrates und der Plan eines panhellenischen Perserkrieges’ (n.51) 108–10.

<sup>63</sup> The idea of a Panhellenic campaign against the Persian empire is common in fourth-century Greek political thought, and often made with reference to the Trojan and Persian Wars. Gorgias first advanced ideas of *homonoia* and a war against Persia (c.392 BC), shortly after the short assault by Agesilaus. Lysias revived the suggestion at Olympia in 388 BC, adding also a campaign against the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius I. Isocrates sets out his proposals in the *Panegyricus* (380 BC), which may have been

ist writings of Isocrates reflect popular sentiments to a far greater degree than they helped to form them'.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the wider appeal and public nature of Isocrates' address is important to remember here. As noted already, Isocrates, in the guise of independent counselor, speaks to both an immediate Macedonian and a wider Hellenic audience; and, in doing so, the Athenian urges fellow Greeks to accept the reality of a new political situation and yield to this Argead in mutually-beneficial endeavours, such as the proposed campaign. But, in all, it is Philip who will lead the way as *hegemon*. Echoing that identification of Heracles as the benefactor of all Greece (ἀπάσης κατέστη τῆς Ἑλλάδος εὐεργέτης *To Philip* 76), in closing his address Isocrates urges Philip to now show the *poleis* the same favour:<sup>65</sup>

φημί γὰρ χρῆναί σε τοὺς μὲν Ἑλληνας εὐεργετεῖν, Μακεδόνων δὲ βασιλεύειν, τῶν δὲ βαρβάρων ὡς πλείστων ἄρχειν. ἦν γὰρ ταῦτα πράττης, ἅπαντές σοι χάριν ἔξουσιν, οἱ μὲν Ἑλληνες ὑπὲρ ὧν εὖ πάσχουσι, Μακεδόνες δ' ἦν βασιλικῶς ἀλλὰ μὴ τυραννικῶς αὐτῶν ἐπιστατῆς, τὸ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων γένος, ἦν διὰ σὲ βαρβαρικῆς δεσποτείας ἀπαλλαγέντες Ἑλληνικῆς ἐπιμελείας τύχωσι.

'I say that you should be a benefactor for the Greeks, a king for the Macedonians, and master over as many barbarians as possible. If you do this, all will be grateful to you; the Greeks for the benefits they will receive, the Macedonians if you act like a king and not a tyrant, and the other group, if through you they put off the despotic rule of the barbarian and gain protection from the Greeks.' (Isocrates, *To Philip* 154)

---

supported by Jason of Pherae (c.374 BC, see Isoc. *Phil.*119, Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.12). Notes here taken from the comprehensive summary offered by F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius. Volume I: Commentary on Books I-IV* (Oxford 1957) 308 (on Polybius 3.6.13).

<sup>64</sup> Flower, 'Alexander the Great and Panhellenism' (n.62) 104 n.38.

<sup>65</sup> See also *To Philip* 116 and 140. Shalom Perlman, 'Isocrates *Philippus*: a reinterpretation', *Historia* (1957) 306-317 notes: '[Heracles'] φιλάνθρωπία, εὐνοία, εὐεργεσία and πραότης towards the Greeks are particularly praised. The four characteristics of Heracles and especially his title of εὐεργέτης are very important for the understanding of the propaganda slogans current at the time in Athens and Greece' (314).

Isocrates offers here a famously ambiguous division of humanity into three parts, but with a clear promise that the peoples listed here will all look to the Argead king as grateful clients and subjects.<sup>66</sup> And although no mortal man can hope to surpass the glorious deeds of Heracles (famously ambiguous too), Philip can certainly prove himself worthy of this illustrious line if he sets his mind on the goals Isocrates has advised (*To Philip* 152).<sup>67</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the comprehensive use of Heracles as a role model for Philip in Isocrates' writings is both distinctive and deliberate. And it is even more noteworthy if it was the case that Philip himself, as was suggested earlier, may not have emphasised these mythic connections and his heroic heritage as heavily as other Macedonian kings had done and would do. Nonetheless, by the period of Philip's rule, so developed was the Argead identification with Heracles that Greek authors like Speusippus, Theopompus, and Isocrates could take up the connection and expand on it, further, at their end of an ongoing dialogue with the Macedonians.<sup>68</sup>

Again, we must remember that other voices of dissent did also endure, for whom the Macedonians were not even Greek and could never be heroic in any fashion; voices that would disregard even

---

<sup>66</sup> Sulochana Asirvatham, 'The roots of Macedonian ambiguity in Classical Athenian literature', T. Howe & J. Reames, *Macedonian Legacies. Studies in Ancient Macedonian History and Culture in Honor of Eugene N. Borza* (Claremont 2008) 235-255. See 250-251 for a consideration of a division that 'finds yet another means of accommodating the Macedonians politically by creating a new status for them between Greek and barbarian'.

<sup>67</sup> Although in his last composition, a second *Letter to Philip* written in 338 BC, Isocrates modifies his position. If Philip follows victory at Chaeronea with a successful campaign in Asia, 'there would be nothing left to do but become a god' (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔσται λοιπὸν ἔτι πλὴν θεὸν γενέσθαι *Letter to Philip* 2.5). On the authenticity of the letters to Philip, see George Cawkwell, 'Isocrates', in T. James Luce (ed.), *Ancient Writers: Greece and Rome. Vol. I* (New York 1982) 313-329 (316-317).

<sup>68</sup> Certainly, the question of 'Hellenic credentials' of the Macedonians was a 'familiar enough rhetorical *topos*' by the middle of the fourth century BC, as Asirvatham, 'The roots of Macedonian ambiguity' (n.66) 246 notes.

the great Alexander as a lowly Margites.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Demosthenes' famous dismissal of the young king's Homeric presentation as a puerile affectation echoes a key point made in the opening section of this piece. Note how particular the Athenian's barb is to its target; because *that* Alexander aspired to an identification with the epic Achilles, he was summarily dismissed by Demosthenes as a comic Margites. In his disdain, Demosthenes highlights that such Homeric pretensions and presentation were quite specific to the son of Philip.<sup>70</sup>

However, down through the history of the Argead royal house, from Alexander I to (and including) Alexander III, Heracles remained the key heroic model for an often-embattled dynasty.<sup>71</sup> The hero-god was the crucial paradigm for rulers, providing an identity and authority for the Argeads that would appeal to diverse audiences both at home and abroad. Heracles, the 'ultimate ancestor' in ancient myth, was exploited by the Macedonian ruling class in a careful, considered, and consistent manner.<sup>72</sup> That he remained such an important icon of identity for later Hellenistic dynasties too, surely

---

<sup>69</sup> Aeschines, in *Against Ctesiphon*, tells of Demosthenes' dismissal of the young Alexander when he succeeded to Philip's throne, giving the new king the nickname Margites (3.160). See also Marsyas, *FGrH* 135 F3. As Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* (n.2) 60-61 notes: 'Margites was one of the more extreme figures in Greek poetry. He was the anti-hero of a parody in Homer's *Iliad*... By calling Alexander the new Margites, Demosthenes meant that so far from being Achilles, he was nothing but a Homeric buffoon'.

<sup>70</sup> Presuming, of course, that the young king's attempts to present himself as a 'new Achilles' were already widely known. See Green, *Alexander of Macedonia* (n.11) 118, who also suggests that Demosthenes' sneer that Alexander was 'content to saunter around in Pella' (ἐν Πέλλῃ περιπατοῦντα) may be a 'hit at his Peripatetic studies under Aristotle'.

<sup>71</sup> On Alexander the Great and Heracles see Waldemar Heckel's forthcoming piece, 'Alexander, Achilles, and Heracles: between myth and history', in P. Wheatley & E. Baynham (eds.), *East and West in the World Empire of Alexander. Essays in Honour of Brian Bosworth* (Oxford 2015), which I was unable to consult prior to the submission of this article.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Hunter, *Theocritus. Encomium of Ptolemy Philadelphus. Text and Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Berkeley CA 2003) 101. Elsewhere Hunter notes the 'extraordinarily powerful influence which the protean figure of Heracles and his particular modes of heroism had upon Greek aristocratic ideology', see his *Theocritus and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry* (Cambridge 1996) 12-13.

owes much to the innovations of the early Argeads and the strength of the tradition they established.<sup>73</sup> Overall, it is the liminal Heracles who adds most colour to presentations of the Macedonian kingdom and the courts of the ancient Argead monarchs.

*Maynooth University*

E.P. MOLONEY  
eoghan.moloney@nuim.ie

---

<sup>73</sup> For Heracles in the Hellenistic period see the summary notes in Hunter, *Theocritus. Encomium of Ptolemy Philadelphus* (n.72) 116-118. On the importance of Heracles to the identity of successive ‘Macedonian’ rulers, see Huttner, *Die politische Rolle der Heraklesgestalt* (n.23) on Heracles and Philip II (65-85), Alexander III (86-123), the Ptolemies (124-145), Lysimachus (146-152), Pyrrhus (153-162), the Antigonids (163-174), and the Attalids (175-190).